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REMINISCENCES

OF

PRINCE TALLEYRAND;

142246

WITH EXTRACTS

FROM HIS

MANUSCRIPTS, SPEECHES,

AND

POLITICAL WRITINGS.

B 703

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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PREFACE.

PRINCE TALLEYRAND has left a name in Europe perhaps the greatest ever achieved by any man in France who has devoted himself exclusively to the civil offices of the state. In the present century, he has become as great a diplomatic authority as was Machiavelli in the sixteenth; and hence the Hôtel Talleyrand, in the Rue St. Florentin, has been regarded by every disciple of state-craft who has visited the French capital, with perhaps as much veneration as the literary devotee accords to the more humble abode at Stratford of the great master of English poetry.

The brilliant career of so public a character as Prince Talleyrand has necessarily become much canvassed, but up to the present time, no account

has been published of his private history, more particularly of his early life. This, however, could only be written by some one peculiarly in the Prince's confidence, who possessed favourable opportunities for studying his personal characteristics, and of becoming acquainted with his first struggles, experiences, and adventures.

The writer of this work enjoyed such opportunities in an eminent degree, as he was the intimate friend of the Prince, and was a constant guest at Valençay. He was in the habit of noting down Talleyrand's revelations and recollections, which were from time to time imparted to him; and the result, as now laid before the public, it will readily be allowed, affords a more interesting portrait of this illustrious statesman than has hitherto been given to the world. Very curious particulars and scenes in Prince Talleyrand's own career are combined with extraordinary anecdotes of his contemporaries, and details are given of private adventure and domestic habits, which, in a truly remarkable and novel manner, illustrate the events of that great drama in which he acted so conspicuous a part.

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REMINISCENCES

OF THE LATE

PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

CHAPTER I.

TALLEYRAND AT VALENÇAY.

It was during the autumn of 18—, that, passing through Paris on my way to the south of Europe, I ventured to pay my *visite de rigueur* to that hallowed shrine—that Mecca of all young diplomatists—the Hôtel Talleyrand, in the Rue St. Florentin, to obtain, as it were, a blessing and an imposition of hands from the high-priest of the diplomatic craft, ere I ventured, novice and without guile as I then was, to put forth on the unknown sea of politics. Perhaps there lingered in my mind a

latent hope of acquiring some new information concerning the hidden rocks and shoals, the under-currents, which were not yet marked down in the very imperfect chart at that time existing in my brain, and by the aid of which I might, by steering aright, gain more quickly than my colleagues the glorious port of ambassadorship.

I had once had the good fortune to form part of a company, assembled by the owner of P—— House, to meet the Prince de Talleyrand, during the very last Easter vacation which he had spent in England; so that it was not as a complete stranger that I now ventured, all trembling and awe-struck, to seek the presence of his excellency.

The hour was somewhat late for a morning visit, when I called at the hotel; but I had been told by one who knew him well, that his hour of *confidence* and kindness, his hour of *benevolence*, in short, was decidedly the one hour before dinner; and so already, even in the smallest matter, beginning to move professionally, I had acted entirely upon the strength of this friendly warning.

I was not disappointed; for I found the veteran diplomatist enjoying the *otium cum dignitate*, after the fatigues of the day. He was seated in his

easy chair, reclining with that peculiarly easy grace which, in spite of his lameness, characterized his every attitude and movement. A bundle of newspapers lay upon the table before him; some were scattered on the floor around; but he had evidently forgotten, for the moment, the world and all its fretful politics, and was gazing with fond affection at the gambols of his fair young niece, who was on her knees upon the floor by his side, her arm resting upon the elbow of his chair, teasing and provoking the large English spaniel, Carlo, the delight of the prince, and his constant companion.

It would be difficult for a painter to imagine a scene more interesting, or even more poetical, than the one which thus suddenly presented itself to me. The long golden hair of the child fell forward in a glittering shower, blending with the silvery masses which, to the latest hour of his life, shaded in such luxuriant abundance the calm brow of the prince; and, as he bent down over her, the contrast between the fair and blooming face, animated as it was by the glow of youth and the excitement of the game, with that cold, impenetrable countenance, those fixed and marble features, was rendered yet more striking. It was the dim immo-

vable Past, seeking to interrogate the busy, smiling Future; Old Time striving to detain one single rosy hour, and pausing to gaze while yet the charm endured. There was, indeed, over the whole scene a shadow of bygone times, which the graceful figure of that fair girl alone seemed to attach to the Present.

The drawing-room into which I was ushered was noble and lofty, although an *entresol*, and through the high casements the setting sun of autumn poured in its rich and glowing beams, seeming to pause in fondness over that scene, and, forgetting all besides, to linger there. Through the arched vista of the Tuileries, late so green, but already bared of foliage, the darkening sky gave token of the near approach of twilight, and I could not help being struck with the fitness of the emblem.

I had leisure to contemplate the scene, for the low suppressed laughter of the child, and the playful growling of old Carlo, had prevented the announcement of my name from immediately reaching the ear of his excellency, and it was not till I stood within a step or two of his chair that he became aware of my presence. He then rose

slightly, leaning on his cane, and gave me that gracious and courtly welcome—a reminiscence of the old *régime*—which neither his passage through the revolutionary mire, nor even across the broad Atlantic, had been able to mar. That bland and polished urbanity was the attribute of a race of men of which he was the last representative, and of which we shall see the like no more.

My conference with him was but short, and passed chiefly in inquiry after the friends I had left; some few questions concerning my future destination; an observation or two respecting the *chargé d'affaires* at that time resident at the court to which I was bound; but nothing further; and I, who had indulged in vague dreams of the treasures of advice concerning my new career, to be gathered during this interview, was just on the point of taking my leave, without having dared to breathe a hint upon the subject which lay uppermost in my thoughts, when, to my delight, amid the numberless kind things he uttered upon the subject of my journey, he added, with a bland and courteous smile, which from the old to the young so greatly enhances the value of the kind speech, "Vous viendrez nous voir à Valençay?"

And then, as though he had reserved all his urbanity till the last, acting upon his own principle of "always waiting to the end," he told me that he himself was on the point of hastening thither,—that I should see him no more in Paris,—that the place would not be far out of my road on my journey southwards; and the kindness of the tone, the friendly glance with which the words were accompanied, left me no doubt of their sincerity: so I accepted the invitation with the most joyful alacrity, and, before we parted, he himself had fixed the day for our meeting again—at Valençay!

At Valençay! Here, then, was I about to accomplish by a mighty stride, to overleap by a single bound, many a weary league on the highway of politics; and moreover, to gain ease for the remainder of the dusty journey. So, with these pleasant illusions in my mind, it cannot be wondered at if I rather hastened than retarded my movements. With a heart beating high with expectation did I set forth on this pilgrimage. It had been one of my day-dreams, which I was about to convert into reality. I had so often longed to behold the great statesman in his retirement, and now I was about to see him in his hours of leisure and of *laisser-*

aller, and to share with his chosen inmates all the treasures of his rich and varied store of reminiscences!

I had heard that it was his great delight, when at Valençay, to call up the spirits of the shadowy past, and that here he seemed to live and breathe amongst them; that here he took no heed of to-day, or of what might befal on the morrow; that his soul was with the past—his thoughts were all of days gone by, and lingered not with the present. By turns abiding amid the courtly saloons of the days previous to the Revolution, he would tell of Madame de Boufflers and Marie Antoinette, and of the *folle vie* led by the young, when he, too, was in his youth. Then the rude Conventional—the stern Republican—the warlike figures of the Empire—the pale, dim Silhouettes of the Restoration, would all arise, and pass in crowded array before his enchanted audience; with such grace and truth, too, were they all endowed, that sometimes the listener could believe that he had seen and heard the like, and that he too had been of them and among them.

Valençay had ever been the favourite residence of the prince. It was here that he had ever pre-

ferred seeking relief from the political turmoil of the moment,—perhaps to repose after the fatigues of the last struggle,—perhaps to gain fresh courage and vigour for that which, with his unerring foresight, he knew to be inevitable. It was here that he sought the rest which he sometimes needed—it is here that, by his own desire, he now reposes for ever.

These are the reminiscences which must henceforth render Valençay one of those few favoured spots, scattered here and there over the surface of our dull earth, towards which fancy hurries on before, and where Memory lingers long behind; places that shine out, amid the dulness of this dreary world, with the bright lustre which the memory of the great and good has shed around them, and which, to the traveller through the land where they are found, become hallowed shrines, that it is scorn and reproach to have visited the country without beholding.

In my case, and young as I then was, it is no wonder if I approached, with feelings of almost undue reverence, the spot where dwelt the last great statesman of the age—the last, at least, of that class of men who, singlehanded and alone, could

lead, by the very force of their spirit, whole nations to think as they thought, and to act as they directed. Imagination had indeed gone on long before, and paused to await me at the gates of the Château of Valençay. Nor was I disappointed on my first approach. It is a noble and stately pile, well suited to the regal tastes and habits of him who at that time shed additional lustre over its sumptuous retirement.

The dark forest, through which the road lies for many miles, gives a grandeur to the scenery, of which this part of France is elsewhere almost entirely devoid. The broad Moorish towers of the château are seen for some time, alternately appearing, and then lost to sight, until finally they form the termination of the splendid avenue de Gâtines, through which they are beheld at a great distance, gradually rising in the perspective, and seeming to increase in size as the traveller draws near, with an effect almost magical. Nothing can be finer or more original than the appearance of these far-famed towers, which give to the building an air of oriental grandeur, perfectly unique. They were built at different periods, the first one having been added to the edifice, which at the time was already

a mixture of Gothic and *moyen age* architecture, by M. de Luçay, on his return from his travels in the East, and their broad shining domes, surmounted by light gilt weathercocks, bring strangely to mind the mosques and palaces of the Asiatic cities.

The approach to the château is particularly grand and magnificent, being through an avenue of glorious old chestnut-trees, through which, at the moment of my arrival, the long rays of the evening sun were pouring, all aslant, over the green turf, making wide patches of the soft grass appear all on flame, while the shadows thrown between appeared black and mysterious from the contrast. The carriage drove up the noble avenue de Gâtines. The gay postillions, with long tricoloured ribbons fluttering in the wind, with plaited pigtail and heavy jack-boots, cracking their whips, with loud halloo, to cheer forward the wild, scampering, rope-harnessed horses, gave such an *air de regence* to the scene, that I could almost fancy myself, as I leaned eagerly forward in the carriage, to be the hero of one of Marivaux's delightful novels, and to be some one of his dear ingenious Counts de P., about to pay his first visit to some fascinating, rebellious,

unfaithful Marquise de F. or de N. Had such indeed been the case, I do not think the said hero could have felt more alarmed and embarrassed than I did during the few moments when the carriage, having turned into the great gates, drove with stunning *fracas* round the wide *cour d'honneur*, and stopped at the princely *perron* of the vestibule.

It was quite a relief to learn from the domestic, who conducted me, through an endless labyrinth of staircases and corridors, to my room, that the large party then assembled at the château had all dispersed after the usual early dinner, and that the building was at the moment a complete desert. Nothing could suit me better, for it gave me time to collect all my scattered ideas, and to establish myself in the great drawing-room, *receiving* not *received;* and all timid juveniles know well the full value of this difference. The view from the windows of this room was magnificent. An ancient and heavy cloister, forming a cool, shady piazza during the summer, and a dry and cheerful retreat in winter, lay immediately without, and through each arch the varied and rich landscape was enframed. The broad expanse of park, with its

dark belt of forest beyond, and the little town of Valençay, with the Gothic spire of its church, and the white roofs glittering in the sun, by turns appeared, as I moved on, like the images in a child's magic lantern.

In a short time, the various stragglers began to return from their walks, and I was delighted when, among the very first persons who greeted me, I recognised an old acquaintance, whom I had often seen in society during the prince's embassy in London. Those who have ever felt the delight of finding an acquaintance in a strange land, and where we had anticipated meeting none but strangers, will readily believe my joy at being greeted in well-remembered accents by C., who became from that moment a valued and precious friend, more so than many whom I had known and loved from childhood, but who were now absent, and could afford me no aid in encountering the mighty leviathan within reach of whose tremendous jaws I seemed so thoughtlessly to have wandered.

With the kind assistance of this friend, however, I began, in a very short time, to regain my confidence, and, before the creaking of carriage-wheels upon the gravel without had announced the return

of the Prince from his evening drive, I had been *mis au courant* of all the *habitudes de la maison*, and the station and character of each individual had been so fully laid down to me, that I now felt armed with too much foreknowledge to dread any longer the ignorance and inexperience which had so often been my worst enemies.

The room was wellnigh filled by the time the Prince had descended from his carriage, and, preceded by old Carlo, barking and yelping, had slowly traversed the wide vestibule. For such is the courtierlike propensity of human nature, that, although no warning-bell had summoned the different stragglers homeward, yet, by marvellous instinct, they all seemed aware of the very moment of the prince's return to the château, and pressed eagerly to the saloon to receive him. There was a general advance towards the door when the prince entered, leaning on his gold-headed cane, and then the assembly divided in the midst, to allow him to pass through, to gain his large fauteuil by the fire. This movement gave an effect to his *entrée*, of indescribable interest. Altogether, it was one of the prettiest pieces of small-court ceremony I ever witnessed.

The conversation was carried on, for some little time, standing, the company separating in small groups; but, when lights were brought, and the prince had fairly taken his seat at the whist-table, the *salon* began, though gradually, to clear. Some of the guests retired to rest, in order to be abroad betimes on the morrow; some withdrew stealthily by a side door, and presently the noise of feet and the clattering of billiard-balls told plainly the reason of their absence; anon, another group would disappear, and then I was sure that a faint odour of cigars would blow in from the half-closed window. For me, I bravely resisted every invitation to move from the seat wherein I had so comfortably ensconced myself, being sufficiently occupied, this first evening, in making myself familiar with all the actors in the scene going on around me; and I was well repaid for my self-denial, for at that very moment were assembled, in that old courtly saloon, some of the brightest intellectual luminaries of the kingdom.

"You are fortunate," exclaimed C., as he kindly came to take his seat beside me, "in being a guest with some of our most remarkable illustrations of the ancient *régime*—men who remain, few in

number, to tell the generation of our day what is meant by the 'wits' and *beaux esprits* of a period which, although not distant, yet seems driven centuries back by the rapidity with which new eras, new societies, and new dynasties have succeeded each other. For instance," continued he, "there is the Count de M.; I dare not call him the *old* count, although, were age measured by years alone, he would certainly be considered to have well earned the title. He is already past the threescore years and ten fixed by the great Psalmist as the term of man's life, and yet here he is, more alive, more pungent, more racy than ever. I know of no greater contrast than that which exists between this man and our princely host.

"Look at them as they sit opposite to each other, both intent upon the chances of the game; the one so calm and dignified, reflecting almost tediously upon the card he ought to play; then placing it, slowly and deliberately, upon the table. Watch him for ever so long a time, you will detect no symptom of impatience, no gesture of disappointment, as the tricks are carried from the board by his rival. But seldom, even during a run of decided ill luck, have I seen him bite his pale lip

slightly and in silence. Now, look at the count: see with what bitter merriment he shoves the cards towards his adversary—how the stinging gibe, the acid *bon mots* fall from his lips, each sufficient to ensure success to a whole act of a modern vaudeville—how he grasps the cards with impatient glee when they have fallen to his share—his keen eye lighting up, and his tall, thin figure rising in his chair, while he pours a burning torrent of witty pun and quolibet into the ear of his neighbour. There is more life in that man, in spite of his years, and the hard life he has led, than in a dozen of the poor, stunted *jeunes Frances* who surround him.

"The prince and M. are like two schoolboys, hating, dreading each other, yet each one feeling that the presence of the other is needed to bring out his own value; they are steel and flint, by turns giving and receiving blows, and sending up sparks which dazzle the listener and hold him entranced. The one, cold and reflective, could crush his tormentor, were he but allowed time and opportunity; while the other, by his great presence of mind, never at fault, and his brilliant and pungent satire, will sometimes cause his *friend* to writhe,

again, more brilliant and more sparkling than ever. His fire seems, verily, unquenchable, for it bursts forth from amid the ashes with which poverty and humiliation would fain seek to smother it, and burns with a brighter glow after each fruitless endeavour that his enemies have made to extinguish it altogether.

"'*Mon pauvre ami!*' said one of his *roué* friends to him, after one of the many tornadoes to which, during his life he had been exposed—an execution in his house, and his horses all sold—'*mon pauvre ami—que te reste-t-il?*'

"'*Moi!*' exclaimed the count, as he turned away, with light, buoyant step and smiling countenance. In less than a year he was again *remonté*, in full credit and full success; his house, as before, the resort of all that was gay and brilliant in the metropolis—himself again the oracle of a wide and fashionable circle. The answer and the result, display the character of the man better than whole pages of written biography could do. His faith lies in his own capacity for turning to account the weakness of others, and never has it been deceived."

"Who is the tall, thin adversary of the count?"

said I, struck with the appearance of the person, as he turned and spoke in a low confidential tone to the prince.

" Oh, that is the Count de F.," said my friend, " the antiquated beau of Parisian high life. He is the same gay philanderer, the same favoured swain, the object of as many fluttering sighs and tender regrets, as he was thirty years ago, when he was in his prime, or forty years ago, when he was young. Some people have affixed a nearer relationship between him and the prince than the latter has ever chosen to avow. Be this as it may, the count, whether from this cause, or from the number of years which he has spent in the friendship and society of the Prince de Talleyrand, has imbibed much of his ready wit and cold, sarcastic philosophy, and displays them sometimes at the expense of others, with the same reckless disregard of feelings or *amour propre*. His victims are numerous, but they too are sometimes fully revenged by the prince, with whom he cannot vie, in spite of the florid wit and forked satire in which he will indulge.

" The poor count had well nigh been overwhelmed, sunk for ever, on one occasion, by a

witticism of Talleyrand's, which spread over Paris in an incredibly short space, and filled the heart of the poor old dandy with gall and bitterness. The prince had always rallied the count most unmercifully upon his absurd pretensions to youth and gallantry, and yet, in spite of this, so great is the infatuating effect of love, that the latter was foolish and unguarded enough to mention, with great mystery, a new conquest which he had made, and upon which he piqued himself not a little. This time it was a lady of talent, rank, and fashion, and he wished most particularly to *keep* his conquest, now that he had so fairly won it. It was just at the period of the new year, and *étrennes* were flying in every direction.

" 'I should like to give the lady of my heart something that would please her,' said the count; 'do assist me, prince; what can I procure that would be most rare—something unique of its kind—something that is but seldom seen, and of which the like could not be brought to her from any bodyelse.'

" The prince appeared to reflect for a moment, and the count waited impatiently for the answer.

" 'I have it—I have it,' at length exclaimed the prince, joyfully.

" ' What ? tell me quickly, I will go this moment and procure it.'

" ' No need to stir,' returned the prince, drily; ' give her one of the hairs of your head—if you can ;—it must indeed be a thing unique of its kind, and of which none could bring her the fellow.'

" This allusion to the baldness of the antiquated Adonis was irresistible; the *bon mot* was sure to be remembered wherever he appeared, and for a long time it drove him from the society of those who had heard it. It was only when he had *proved* the reality of his pretensions, by the splendid marriage which he made soon afterwards, that he regained confidence, and once more appeared as you now behold him, more soft and Cupid-like, more captivating, and more *papillonant* than ever.

" The guest, who sits opposite to him, his partner in the game, is the celebrated Royer Collard, perhaps, saving our host, the best specimen of the *ancien régime* now existing in the country. As Talleyrand may be taken as type of the old French nobleman, so may Royer Collard be admitted as specimen of the ancient French gentleman. It is a pleasure to look upon that man, and

behold in his calm, open eye, and his broad expanse of forehead, denoting at once the union of genius and benevolence, a perfect corroboration of all the good which one has heard from all parties concerning him. Throughout every change and form of government under which he has been called into action, he has been remarkable for his inflexible integrity. No swerving—no deviation —no compromise—but straight-forward has he marched, without flinching, in the path which he had chosen. It was he who applied to Guizot the epithet which it is said so diverted the king. '*Austère intrigant!*' exclaimed he, when he heard that Guizot had again accepted office, after his expressed determination not to act with the then existing government. The *mot* flew from mouth to mouth, and, whether correct or not, was at least *successful*, which is everything in Paris.

"I firmly believe Royer Collard to be a true and disinterested friend of the prince. In Paris, they live much together; scarcely a single day being suffered to pass without his paying his visit at the Hôtel Talleyrand. Perhaps he is the only person amid the crowd by whom the prince is surrounded, in whom the latter places perfect reliance, because,

with his keen judgment and great knowledge of human nature, he knows well enough that he is the only one with whom interest will yield to friendship.

"Of course," proceeded my friend C., "the château is sometimes visited, like every other château in the kingdom, by all the '*fâcheux*' and the '*importuns*' of the country round, and the prince, being in a more elevated position than his neighbours, has also more than their share of hospitality to bestow. Just observe yonder old gentleman with the powdered head, looking over M.'s cards, with a knowing air. That is a near neighbour of the prince, to whom he is compelled by policy to do the honours of the house. It is impossible to behold a better type of the 'Berrichon,' whom their own George Sand has so aptly described as '*moitié ours, moitié mouton.*' His estate joins that of Valençay; part of it can be seen from the windows of the gallery of the château, and, on looking thence the other day, he exclaimed to the Count de M., who was admiring it, '*Mon Dieu, comte!* just think: if I had only had the misfortune to lose my father last year, I might have bought all the land right away to the left, and made the place worth

having!' A whole written volume could not paint the Berrichon character more clearly than this single speech. It is verily believed, that were the thing permitted by law, the Berrichon would throw his own children into the balance, if it were necessary to complete a good bargain in the disposal of his sheep.

"You would be much diverted were you to witness all the intriguing and manœuvring that is going forward among the *propriétaires* and *gentilâtres* of this part of the country, to gain admission here. This château is looked upon with wonder and awe, and its broad bastions and Moorish towers are fabled through the province to contain more dark secrets and more hidden mysteries than ever were confided to the grim keeping of the Bastile or the Seven Towers. A short time ago, the Mayor of C., a large town of this province, at some little distance from this, was invited by the prince to dine at the château, and, as the roads were bad, and the nights without moon, he was courteously asked to delay his return home until the following morning. You may imagine the sudden increase of importance, the sudden puffing of pride, with which the worthy mayor accepted the invitation,

and also the parting injunctions of *madame son épouse*, to bring back to her and her daughters the long history of all the wondrous deeds which were going forward inside those aristocratic walls—a sealed mystery which, from their own experience, they knew that they could never hope to solve.

"It so happened that, on the very morning of the day so rife with expectation to the poor mayor, Comte Molé had arrived at Valençay. Nothing could be more propitious, and the worthy official rubbed his hands with glee, at the thought of the immense information he should gain, by listening to the conversation of two such distinguished politicians—of the awful importance of his position with regard to his colleagues at the *conseil* at home —of the delight and pride of his ambitious wife, while she listened to the detail of all her husband had heard concerning the secret affairs of the nation; in short, the honest *bourgeois* felt, from the very moment of his arrival, that tremulous, uncertain kind of emotion (one hardly knows whether to call it pain or pleasure), which precedes in most minds the realization of some dream which has long been nursed and fostered with great care.

"Dinner passed away; the honest functionary,

all eyes and ears to what was going forward, listened intently on every side to catch the least significant observation which should fall, either from the lips of his host or of the illustrious guest. But it was in vain he strained his hearing, listening so intently that his neighbour was once or twice compelled to remind him of the dish before him; not a word of politics was breathed during the whole repast; and when once, during a short silence which occurred, he ventured, in a timid voice, to ask the prince if he thought the Belgian monarchy would be of long duration, he was merely answered by a request to take more champagne, and the conversation once more resumed its light and frivolous tone. Wit there was in abundance; sparkling showers, and bold satire, and learning too; but the '*maire de son endroit*' cared not for all the good things which were flying past him from one end of the table to the other, and convulsing every listener with bursts of hearty laughter; he smiled not, poor man, but rather sat lost in painful wonder, that the great ones of the earth should thus lose the precious hours in idle bantering and unseemly mirth! But he hoped that, once in the *salon*, the conversation might at length fall into a more serious and profitable vein, and he had al-

ready taken his place close to the prince, determined to catch each syllable that fell from his lips when Count Molé approached. This he felt sure would happen; of course it could not chance otherwise. At length, Count Molé approached, and leant over the back of the prince's chair. He spoke, in the very ear of the prince, a confidential whisper, which the mayor heard, however, distinctly, so close had he drawn to the illustrious friends.

"'Prince,' said the count, 'have you forgotten old times and all our fierce encounters? Come, and renew our skill at billiards in the next room; it will make us both all the younger by twenty years!'

"Billiards! the Prince de Talleyrand play at billiards! it could not be; he should have imagined that his lameness would have saved him from *that*. Yet so it was; the Prince de Talleyrand *did* play at billiards; and, in spite of his lameness, was considered one of the most expert players of his day; and so the poor mayor sat the long evening through, discomfited and unhappy, with nothing to tell his wife, and nothing to report to the town council when next it should meet. The disappointment was almost too bitter to be borne.

"Hope, however, did not desert him. He well

knew that the prince and his noble guest could not play at billards the whole night, so he sat awhile waiting with patience, until they should grow tired of the game, and return to the fireside. And they *did* return as he had foreseen, and they *did* seat themselves comfortably, one on each side of the chimney. 'Now will they discuss their latest protocols,' thought the little mayor, as he rubbed his hands in glee. No; the prince was in high spirits, for he had won at billiards. The count was in high spirits too, for he declared he had *let* him win; and the whole conversation was engrossed by the discussion—eternal thrust and parry—attack and *repartee*—which had so worried the mayor at dinner, and of which he could not at all see the wit—not he.

"'At last he was growing quite beside himself, when the prince arose; which action was the signal that the *soirée* was concluded, and that the different guests were free to retire. Yet he had not heard one single word of politics! What would he have to say at the *conseil?* What could he tell his wife? *She* would greet him with reproaches on his return home, and would say that such introductions to the great were of little use, unless he knew

better how to profit by them; nor he felt that, were he to talk till doomsday, he never should be able to persuade her that he had heard not one word of politics. She would accuse him of having napped, as he always did, and always would do, despite her admonition.

"Well; the guests all withdrew, our excellent mayor among the number; but, as he passed the screen down yonder at the door, upon turning back to take a wistful glance at the blazing hearth, he perceived the count reseat himself in the great arm-chair which he had quitted but for an instant, and the prince ensconced once more in the one he had occupied all the evening; he saw the latter draw forward a little *gueridon* which stood near, place upon it a roll of papers which he took from his pocket, and pointing to them, he heard him say to the count—'You see we have *besogne* enough before us. I hope you are not sleepy?'

"The curiosity, the ambition, the *amour propre* of the poor mayor were all roused, and, forgetting the risk he was about to incur—in short, forgetting all but the opportunity of retrieving lost time—he slid himself into a chair which stood most invitingly near the door, in the shadow of the screen, and pre-

pared to listen with due attention. There was a pause, however, during which the prince rose slightly in his chair, to reach down one of the flambeaux from the mantel-piece. The mayor stretched forward eagerly, when his horror may be guessed; for instead of unrolling the mysterious budget, the prince turned to the count, and said, 'Before we begin upon this business, let us conclude the affair we were speaking of before dinner. I am sorry that you have reason to suspect the disaffection of the municipal council of our town; if so, I think your are quite right to have it remodelled. Whom did you say you would like to replace the mayor?'

"The functionary started, and uttered a deep groan, which no doubt prevented him from hearing the count's answer; but the prince again spoke, and asked his friend what he thought of the present one. Of course, the answer was most humiliating for the poor victim, telling of apparent inaptitude for the office, of his impertinent familiarity, and of his eager, inconvenient curiosity—until the unfortunate actually writhed with the pain each word inflicted.

"When the unwelcome harangue was concluded, the prince arose to take a caraffe of water from the

console. The poor mayor was in an awful fright, for the action brought the prince immediately opposite to where he sat, trembling and perspiring from head to foot. The prince poured the water into a tumbler and drank it off, and was about retiring to his seat, when his eye fell upon the figure of the poor little mayor, who would gladly at that moment have been a hundred feet below the earth.

"'Ah! Monsieur L.!' exclaimed he, 'why, in the name of Heaven, have you been thus neglected? Ring, M. de Molé, here is our worthy friend L. actually freezing behind the screen, while waiting for some one to conduct him to his chamber. *Mille pardons*, Monsieur L., for this extraordinary neglect on the part of the servants.'

"The valet-de-chambre appeared.

"'Conduct Monsieur L., immediately to his chamber,' said the prince, significantly, 'and see that the like forgetfulness never happens again with any of the visiters to this house. *Bon soir*, M. le Maire, *bonne nuit, et dormez bien!*'

"The trembling culprit hurried off without uttering a word, so great was his confusion, and departed the next morning at daybreak for his own home.

"It is needless to say that the story of his removal from office was a hoax. The prince, in rising to reach the light from the chimney, had descried, in the looking glass, the shadow of a figure on the opposite wall. His quick perceptions enabled him at once to guess to whom it belonged, from remembrance of the mayor's uneasy curiosity, and indiscreet listening to all that passed during dinner, and he felt determined to punish the mean and cowardly listener. A wink at the count was sufficient; *he* was not one to refuse a hint, and together they thus fooled the victim to their heart's content. The story got abroad, and created great laughter throughout the whole country, and, as might be expected, the little Mayor of C. was ere long caricatured, pamphleted, and paragraphed into resigning, and it was only then that he was allowed to live in peace, and to forget his fatal visit to Valençay."

As my friend concluded his story, the whist-table broke up, and the prince rising, moved towards the fire, where we were seated, and took the arm-chair which was always reserved for him. I must confess that at that identical moment I could enter into the feelings of the worthy Mayor of C., for I,

too, longed for the moment when he would expand, and share with us some of the varied riches of anecdote with which his mind was stored.

It needed but a single spark to fire the train: the prince was *en verve* that evening, and I verily believe a whole volume might be filled with the bare leaves and cuttings of the "Flowers of Rhetoric," with which he charmed us. If he did not possess, like the antique poet of Dante's vision, the power of carrying us into the nether regions, his charm was greater still; for with a beck he conjured up the shadows he wished us to behold, and made them pass in long array before us. One or two of the anecdotes I will relate, for the benefit of my readers, but they must not expect to find one jot of the *manner* of the narrator—the piquancy, the *verve*, the irresistible charm which made the Prince de Talleyrand avowedly the first story-teller of his day. If I can give but a faint idea of the style of conversation which enlivened the long evenings of autumn beneath the princely domes of Valençay, it will be as much as I can hope to accomplish, for the very warmth and vivacity of the prince's manner of relating renders it impossible to repeat his words, and memory fails to retrace the

fairy chain by which imagination was so sportively held captive and enthralled.

The conversation had turned upon bonnie Scotland, and the prince, amid many regrets at his inability to visit the land where dwelt so many of his best friends, expressed much curiosity respecting divers usages and customs of the Scotch, some of which are so unlike those of any other nation on the face of the globe. Among other things, he said he had ever felt an eager desire to witness an example of second sight, and asked me many questions concerning this extraordinary gift; to which I was happily enabled to answer in a satisfactory manner, from having heard in my own family of many illustrations of this peculiarity, all witnessed and backed by the evidence of sundry old nurses and attendants, who had been for ages in the family, and of course believed without inquiry. My poor anecdotes, rough and uncouth as they were, seemed to interest the company—this kind of superstition being a thing unknown among the French, who, if they are gifted with the most florid wit, have certainly the driest imaginations of any people in Europe.

"Somnambulism, and the waking sleep, might

account for the origin of such a wild belief," said one of the company.

"Or the faculty of fixing the mind with straining energy on one point," said another.

"Or, perhaps the sudden light—the quick, vivid flash, which reveals to some strong and powerful minds THE POSSIBLE, the TRUE," said the prince.

"I remember," continued he, "upon one occasion having been gifted for one single instant, with this unknown and nameless power. I know not to this moment whence it came; it has never once returned; and yet, upon that one occasion it saved my life; without that sudden and mysterious inspiration, I should not now be here to tell the tale. I had freighted a ship in concert with my friend Beaumetz. He was a good fellow, Beaumetz, with whom I had ever lived on the most intimate terms; and, in those stormy times, when it needed not only friendship to bind men together, but almost godlike courage to dare to show that friendship, I could not but prize most highly all his bold and loyal demonstrations of kindness and attachment to me. I had not a single reason to doubt his friendship; on the contrary, he had given me on several occasions most positive proofs of his sincere

devotion to my interests and well-being. We had fled from France together, we had arrived at New York together, and together we had lived in perfect harmony during our stay there. So, after having resolved upon improving the little money that was left us by speculation, it was still in partnership and together that we freighted a small vessel for India, trusting all to the goodly chance which had befriended us in our escape from danger and from death, to venture once more *together* to brave the storms and perils of a yet longer and more adventurous voyage.

"Everything was embarked for our departure; bills were all paid and farewells all taken, and we were waiting for a fair wind with most eager expectation—being prepared to embark at any hour of the day or night, in obedience to the warning of the captain. This state of uncertainty seemed to irritate the temper of poor Beaumetz to an extraordinary degree, and, unable to remain quietly at home, he hurried to and from the city, with an eager, restless activity which at times excited my astonishment, for he had ever been remarkable for great calmness and placidity of temper.

"One day, he entered our lodging, evidently

labouring under great excitement, although commanding himself to appear calm. I was engaged at the moment, writing letters to Europe, and, looking over my shoulder, he said with forced gaiety, 'What need to waste time in penning those letters? they will never reach their destination. Come with me, and let us take a turn on the Battery; perhaps the wind may be chopping round; we may be nearer our departure than we imagine.'

"The day was very fine, although the wind was blowing hard, and I suffered myself to be persuaded. Beaumetz, I remembered afterwards, displayed an unusual officiousness in aiding me to close my desk and put away my papers, handing me, with hurried eagerness, my hat and cane, and doing other little services to quicken my departure, which at the time I attributed to the restless desire for change, the love of activity, with which he seemed to have been devoured during the whole period of our delay.

"We walked through the crowded streets, to the Battery. He had seized my arm, and hurried me along, seemingly in eager haste to advance. When we had arrived on the broad esplanade, the glory then, as now, of the city of New York, Beaumetz

quickened his step yet more, until we arrived close to the water's edge. He talked loud and quickly, admiring in energetic terms the beauty of the scenery, the Brooklyn Heights, the shady groves of the island, the ships riding at anchor, and the busy scene on the peopled wharf; when suddenly he paused in his mad, incoherent discourse, for I had freed my arm from his grasp, and stood immovable before him. Staying his wild and rapid steps, I fixed my eyes upon his face. *He turned aside, cowed and dismayed.* 'Beaumetz,' I shouted, '*you mean to murder me*—you intend to throw me from the height into the sea below. Deny it, monster, if you can!'

"The maniac stared at me for a moment, but I took especial care not to avert my gaze from his countenance, and he quailed beneath it. He stammered a few incoherent words, and strove to pass me, but I barred his passage with extended arms. He looked vacantly right and left, and then flung himself upon my neck and burst into tears. ''Tis true—'tis true, my friend. The thought has haunted me day and night, like a flash from the lurid fire of hell. It was for this I brought you here. Look, you stand within a foot of the edge of the parapet

—in another instant, the work would have been done!'

"The demon had left him; his eye was still unsettled, and the white foam stood in bubbles on his parched lips; but he was no longer tossed by the same mad excitement under which he had been labouring so long, for he suffered me to lead him home without a single word. A few days' repose and silence, bleeding and abstinence, completely restored him to his former self, and, what is most extraordinary, the circumstance was never mentioned between us. My FATE was at work. It was during those few days of watching by the bedside of poor Beaumetz, that I received the letters from France which announced to me the revocation of the decree which had sent me a wanderer to America. The *Directoire* had relented, and I was invited to return with all speed. I sought not to resist the appeal, and at once decided on leaving Beaumetz to prosecute our speculation alone, and on returning to Paris immediately.

"The blow was cruel to poor Beaumetz, who was fully persuaded, I have no doubt, that it was in dread of another attack on his part that I had now the wish to leave him. No argument I could

make use of, no assurances of unchanged friendship, could shake his opinion, and our parting was a most stormy and painful one. I made over to him my interest in the ship which we had freighted together, and he departed for India, while I bent my course once more towards my *belle France.*

" Once more in a position to assist my friends, my first thought was of Beaumetz, and one of my first acts was the cancelling of his death-warrant. I wrote to him to announce the joyful news, addressing my letter to the merchant at Calcutta to whom he had been recommended. In due time, receiving no answer, I wrote again; but my letters were returned, with the information that the ship, which had sailed from New York some months before, and of which M. Beaumetz was supercargo, had not arrived, that no tidings had been received of its fate, and that great fears were entertained of its total loss. The apprehension was justified, *for from that day to this no tidings have ever been received of the ship, nor, alas! of my poor friend Beaumetz!*"

The prince paused a moment, seeming to collect his sad remembrances of Beaumetz, and I could not but admire the singular good fortune which

had caused him to abandon his voyage to India. How different might have been the fate of France, nay, of Europe, had he sailed in that ship! Well may he have gained among his friends the title of "Fortune's master!"

"But what was really the motive of your first suspicion of the murderous intent of Beaumetz?" said one of the company.

"I know not to this very hour," replied the Prince de Talleyrand; "it was not his eye, for I was not looking at him at the moment, I was gazing at the sublime view which he himself was pointing out to my notice;—it was not in the tone of his voice either, in which lay the warning of my danger; it was a sudden and mysterious impulse for which I have never been able to account—one of those startling and fearful mysteries which even the strongest minds are contented to accept without inquiry, being satisfied that such things are, and never daring to ask wherefore. Many persons, the *Illuminés* for example, who ruled the *monde philosophique* for so long a period, have ascribed this sudden revelation of the hidden TRUTH entirely to the effects of magnetism, and there are instances well known, wherein the great masters

of the art have been able to produce the same effect at pleasure. Cagliostro, to whom I once mentioned the circumstance, had often obtained the same results by his wonderful powers of magnetism."

"What, *mon prince*, have you ever seen Cagliostro?" exclaimed the fair Duchess de V., raising her head from her tapestry frame, and gazing into the prince's face, with an amusing expression of wonder and of awe.

"Ay, that have I," returned the prince, gravely; "often have I seen him, fair lady, and am not of those who condemn him at once, without examination, unthinkingly, as an impostor; for the man *believed* himself: no wonder, then, that he could so easily persuade others."

"Oh, now, do tell us something about this Cagliostro!" exclaimed the young duchess, shaking back her fair ringlets, as she leant eagerly forward, and laid her white and jewelled hand upon the elbow of the prince's chair; "do tell us all about your interview with the famous magician; but mind, tell us the truth. Where did he live?—how did he look?—what did he wear?"

"Nay," returned the prince, smiling, "were I

to tell all I know concerning him, my story would not be done till to-morrow night, at this same hour."

We all involuntarily followed the direction of his gaze towards the clock upon the mantelpiece. Alas! the hand was wearing round, and stood within a very few minutes of the hour of one.

"We must defer the story of Cagliostro's wonders till another time," said he, "but you shall not lose by waiting. *Vous n'y perdrez rien, madame.* But you shall sleep *this* night at least in peace; which you might never do again should you happen to *believe!* So, messieurs, *bonne nuit— à demain.*

He arose. Of course the whole assembly followed the movement, and in a few moments each one had retired.

My chamber was in one of the turrets which form the corner towers of the château, and, by a most singular piece of good fortune, I found that it was close to that of my friend. We lingered some few minutes, taper in hand, upon the threshold, and, with his usual kindness, C. proposed to me, as he took his leave for the night, to conduct me through the château and grounds on the morrow.

"We are all independent here," said he; "you must not feel surprised if you are left to cater for your own amusement until dinner, for each one does what is right in his own eyes, and the morrow's plans are determined on before night; so that interlopers must necessarily be excluded, for the first day at least. But you shall not be quite abandoned; I will be with you betimes in the morning, and we shall have ample occupation for a long day, in wandering over the beauties of this place, which must some day become one of the most celebrated spots in our country."

He left me, and I soon sank to sleep, dreaming of all I had seen and heard, and with anticipations, too, of what more I was to see and hear before I took my departure from Valençay.

CHAPTER II.

CONDUCT OF TALLEYRAND AT THE REVOLUTION OF 1830.

It will be readily believed that I needed no arousing on the morrow. In spite of my weary journey, and the late hour of retiring to rest, I was up and *sur pied* long before my friend had left his chamber. The morning was beautiful, and from my window it was pleasant to watch the departure of the hounds and sportsmen from the court-yard to the green forest. For my part, however, I felt no envy, but rather stood wondering that people endowed with the sense of hearing could endure with patience the eternal twang of the *cor de chasse*, of all sounds, I verily believe, the most fatiguing and abominable.

I went down to await C. upon the green *pelouse*

which lay so invitingly before my window, and I paused to look up with interest at the broad frontage of the château, which lay in the light of the morning sun, whose beams, reflected on the shining domes of the huge Moorish towers, made the whole building bring to mind some rich and sumptuous palace of the Levant. It was the delight of the prince to say that "many were the seigneurs of the country who could put forth the old feudal boast of *pignon sur rue*, and *donjon sur roche*, but that it was reserved for him to display the broad flanking towers of the Turkish serai or Moorish generalife. It was not long before I was aroused from my gaze of admiration by my friend, who came bounding over the grass to meet me. He smiled as he beheld the reverential look I fixed upon the window which he had pointed out as belonging to the chamber of the prince, where the drawn curtains and closed *jalousies* announced the profound repose in which its inmate was still buried.

"You are like the rest of the world," said he, taking my arm. "I know that at this moment you are nursing all kinds of fancies, the one more absurd and '*banal*' than the other, concerning the old diplomate's sleeping visions, which already I

have seen compared in one of your newspapers to the 'slumbers of the rattlesnake, or the solitary dreamings of the hyæna waiting for his prey, and sure that it cannot escape his cruel jaws.' Nothing," continued he, "can be more unjust than the opinions, formed in England of the extreme cunning of the character of Prince Talleyrand, of the far sight of his self-interest, of his habitual deception. They add another example to the many on record of most extraordinary popular delusions. No man was ever perhaps more influenced by the circumstances of the moment, and less resolved upon the course he would pursue until the time arrived for action, than the prince. The conduct which he pursued during the events of the revolution of July has fully proved this, and, when you and I have time and privacy, I think I could win you over to my opinion."

"And why not at this moment?" said I. "The occasion is among the best. We are alone, and scarcely likely to be interrupted; and, while we wander across the park, I can listen with as much attention as though we were closeted together in the most silent chamber of the château."

C. took my arm and moved forward.

"I can but give you my own impressions concerning the opinions of Prince Talleyrand during the eventful struggle of the three days," said he; "but you may rely upon the truth of my statement of the *facts* which took place upon that occasion. I was present with him during the whole time, an eye-witness to the various emotions by which he was governed, and could judge, as far as my own powers of observation went, of the divers motives by which he was actuated."

As such, I give my friend's opinions to the reader, begging him to remember that they are those of one who knew Prince Talleyrand well, who had been admitted to his intimacy for many years before his death, and that they may be of value, as furnishing the interpretation of many things hitherto problematical.

"Many people," continued my friend, "have been led by the political writers of the day into error, concerning the real causes of the revolution of July; they are eager to represent the courage and patriotism displayed by the liberal party on that occasion of sudden and spontaneous explosion of popular fury, as the effect of a deeply-laid plot, conceived for many months before; and they seek

to impress the public with a false idea of the diplomacy of the *chefs de parti* in the triumphs of the three days. Another idea which has become as general is, that the statesman who had played so conspicuous a part in all our revolutions, from that of 1789 to that of 1830, and had lent with such good grace to each successive government the aid of his splendid talents—whose word, indeed, seemed to decide upon their very existence—was no stranger to the struggles and intrigues which ended in the downfal of Charles X., and the banishment of his dynasty from the soil of France. Without pretending here either to condemn or justify the conduct pursued by Prince Talleyrand under other governments, and which history, freed by time from party spirit and from political passion, will alone be able to judge with equity, let us examine coolly the part he took in the revolution of July. *Facts* may serve better than *opinions*, to enable the observer to judge with more correctness the character of this great man, so little known in reality, even at the present time.

"It cannot be denied that, at the period to which I now refer (1830), the opinions of M. de Talleyrand were most unfavourable to the govern-

ment of Charles X. Like every other man of sense and foresight throughout the kingdom, he beheld with dread the dissolution of the Martignac ministry, and the substitution of the Polignac administration; but such political inconsistencies could not astonish, coming from a man of the stamp of Charles X., whose whole life had been a tissue of inconsistencies, from the famous protest of the Count d'Artois, upon the occasion of the States-General in 1789, to the fatal appointment of the ministry which was to send him forth a second time to emigration, from which he had returned once before, according to Prince Talleyrand's own expression long previous to the catastrophe, '*having learnt little and forgotten nothing.*' M. de Talleyrand, nevertheless, did ample justice to the many good qualities which distinguished the king in private life, and the more he overwhelmed him with contempt as a *chef de parti*, the more he was pleased to acknowledge in him a feeling and generous nature, and a faithful and grateful friend. In point of real and sterling worth he placed him far above his brother Louis XVIII., whom he accused of 'having no friends—only favourites,' and who in his whole life never had the heart to grant a

pardon to a single criminal. The one was a better king, the other a far better man.

"Charles X., however, returned tenfold in hatred and suspicion all the pity and contempt which the wily diplomate sought to cast upon his government; and moreover, the devout monarch never could forget that the Bishop of Autun had renounced the Church, and had married, in spite of the threatened excommunication and eternal damnation voted by Rome as the punishment of such a step; for, although Pope Pius VII. had absolved the bishop from his vows of priesthood, it was never without a thrill of horror that the king beheld on court days his grand chamberlain, who seldom failed on occasions of ceremony and etiquette to present himself before his royal master, in spite of the cold reception he met with in the court circles, where his tottering gait and sarcastic speech had earned for him the sobriquet of '*Le Diable Boiteux*.' The king, blinded by prejudice, even forgot, in this instance, the papal authority; for the marriage of the prince had been sanctioned by the Pope, and was therefore legal in the eyes of the most pious Catholics.

"Nevertheless, at the epoch of the Martignac

administration, it seemed as if a kind of *rapprochement* had taken place, if not between M. de Talleyrand and the king, at least between the former and the ministry. The men who composed this ministry* all of them possessed a degree of moderation in their political opinions, which M. de Talleyrand could not but admire, and, wishing to prove that until then he had been opposed, not to the king's government, but to the principles of the ministry who had conducted it, he sought by every means to show publicly his sympathy for the new ministers. He was seen once more to frequent the ministerial salons, and received the ministers at his own hotel with that *haute politesse* and courtly urbanity for which he was so distinguished, expressing upon every occasion the satisfaction which he felt at seeing the helm of public affairs at last in the grasp of men whose experience rendered them able to comprehend the exigencies of the country, and possessed of resources enabling them to provide the most efficient means of meeting them. This

* M. de Martignac.....Interior.
De la Ferronaye.....Affaires Etrangères.
Feutrier .....Cultes.
Portalis .....Justice.

satisfaction was but of short duration. In the month of August following, Charles X., yielding to the instigations of his secret counsellors, who worked upon his unenlightened conscience—taking, himself, undue alarm at the first check sustained by the *ministère* Martignac in the Chamber of Deputies—replaced the members of his cabinet by the Polignac administration. Throughout the kingdom there arose a cry of indignation at this step.

" M. de Talleyrand, grieved to see the false line of conduct into which the king was falling, but incapacitated from affording help, and moreover, assailed each day by some new vexation, took advantage of a short illness to withdraw for a while from court, in order to restore his health at the château of his niece, the Duchess de Dino, at Rochecotte, in Touraine, where he resolved to pass the ensuing winter.

" Various have been the motives attributed to this retirement at Rochecotte. I am aware that many of the public papers have asserted, and other writers of graver stamp have repeated, that it was during this winter that the plan of attack against Charles X. was conceived and matured, between the *chefs* of the liberal party and M. de Talleyrand,

who, according to general belief, had engaged himself to lend them the aid of his counsel and high influence.

" What gave some little colouring to these reports was the fact, that M. de Talleyrand reckoned among his most intimate friends some of the most violent members of the opposition, who, at the moment of the revolution of 1830, by the force of circumstances, found themselves at the head of the new code of things which they had so long and so ardently desired, and which, after all, was established without their direct influence, as will be proved by a bare recital of facts. Thus, M. de Talleyrand received into his daily intimacy General Sébastiani, the Duc de Broglie, M. Villemain, M. Bertin de Vaux, and M. Molé; all of whom, however, remained passive spectators of the struggle, until the moment when the chance turned in favour of the popular party. There was one man, however, who took an active part in the revolutionary movement, who had prepared and ordered its march by his attacks in the journal of which he was principal editor, and whom M. de Talleyrand encouraged and distinguished by most particular favour. It was, indeed, at Rochecotte, during the

month of May, which Thiers spent there with M. de Talleyrand, that he conceived the plan of those terrific articles in the *National*, which every morning, like the battering ram of ancient warfare, laid in ruins the wretched bulwarks behind which the tottering monarchy thought itself secure.

"Thiers, in fact, did conspire against the government of Charles X.; but it was conspiracy not with this leader or with that; not with such and such a party; but with the immense majority of the nation, to whom he spoke the language they had seldom heard, and which they all could understand; the language of their old affections and of their craving need. But thence to argue that M. Thiers came to Rochecotte to concert with M. de Talleyrand the plan of the *National*, and the overthrow of the government, would be to make M. de Talleyrand play a part much beneath him. It must also be remembered that Thiers was at that time a sub-editor of the *Constitutionnël*, and that nothing foretold in him the future President of Louis Philippe's council. His History of the Revolution, full as it was of false ideas and monstrous principles, thanks to some few narratives of interest, and to the great name of Napoleon, which

is retraced in grand and noble characters, had established for its author a certain reputation in the literary world. But of a surety, M. de Talleyrand, notwithstanding the high opinion he entertained of the talents of Thiers as a man of business, would have been much astonished if, at that period, in his salon at Rochecotte, some modern Cassandra had predicted that the author of the "Revolution Française" would one day become Prime Minister and Chief of the French Cabinet! M. de Talleyrand, with all his boasted perspicacity, his foresight, and his *justesse d'esprit*, would have considered it as a *mauvaise plaisanterie* that a man *sans position sociale*, an *homme de rien*, should ever be considered eligible as a leader of public affairs in a country like France.

"M. Thiers was, in the eyes of M. de Talleyrand, nothing more than a young writer, full of vigour and talent, whom the old seigneur loved to protect, and to initiate into the manners and customs of good society, without a knowledge of which (he would often say) there can be no good taste in literature. But he was the last person in the world who, at that time, could have looked upon Thiers as a conspirator, of whom he was

making himself, by such protection, the vile associate.

"The men of July, whether to curry favour with the new dynasty, or to assume the part of profound politicians, have pretended that they had prepared the fall of Charles X., and they boast that their machinations had aroused the tempest which, in three short days, swallowed up a whole generation of kings. These men have either sought to deceive public opinion, or else have been themselves grossly deceived. Nothing was ever more unlike a conspiracy than the Revolution of 1830; or if conspiracy *did* exist, it was public, general, and unanimous; one in which the whole country bore a part, saving only that small portion of the community bound by ties of honour and gratitude to the elder branch of the House of Bourbon. In fact, there was not a single human being endowed with sense, from one end of France to the other, who, even long before the issuing of the fatal 'Ordonnances' of July, could not have foretold whither the multifarious blunders of Charles X.'s government were hurling the monarchy; but not a soul had the slightest presentiment that the day of reckoning was so nigh; and, as proof of this, it

may be remembered that those men of talent most opposed to the Restoration, such as MM. Pasquier, Molé, Royer-Collard, Sébastiani, De Barante, Guizot, De Broglie, and many others, were struck as by a thunderbolt at the first news of those accursed 'Ordonnances.'

"Among these men stood first and foremost M. de Talleyrand, who could scarcely credit the *Moniteur Officiel* which contained them. To assert then that M. de Talleyrand *conspired* against the Bourbons—that by his *liaisons* with the opposition, and above all, with the Duke of Orleans, he brought on the fall of the elder branch, and the rise of the younger (which it may be allowed he had long foretold) — proves a total ignorance of the circumstances in which M. de Talleyrand was placed, and adds one more to the numerous calumnies which it has been the pleasure of so many writers to heap upon the head of this celebrated statesman. But, if the prince did not absolutely rush to meet the events of July, it cannot be denied that, with his accustomed tact, he knew how to profit by the *faits accomplis*, and that, being once certain of the flight of Charles X., he pointed out, with the rare sagacity with which

he was gifted, and which age had rather increased than diminished, to his old friend the Duke of Orleans, the line of conduct to be pursued in order to avoid, amid the stormy tides by which he was beset, seeking to steer his course against the will of the people.

"It has been to this day a matter of speculation whether the Duke of Orleans had anticipated being called to the throne, or whether it was the force of circumstances which had brought him to it. These are the facts:—although the Duke of Orleans had for a long time looked upon the event of a change in the dynasty as *possible*, and was most certainly *prepared* to place the crown upon his own head in case of such an event, yet even so late as the 30th of July, he hesitated to grasp it, and resisted the arguments and persuasions of Thiers. It is a known fact that the duke was concealed in the environs of Neuilly, in fear of a popular outbreak, when a secret message from M. de Talleyrand, which he received on the evening of that day, caused him to decide at length upon re-entering Paris, and proclaiming himself Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom—the Head of the new Power. The new king soon forgot, however, this proof of

attachment on the part of his old friend; and M. de Talleyrand, who knew that kings, even when chosen by the will of the people, are, for the most part, compelled to be *illustres ingrats*, never, during the years which followed these events, alluded to the circumstances which brought about the *arénement* of Louis Philippe."

Nevertheless, as it is entirely to this secret influence of Prince Talleyrand, which swayed the decision of the Duke of Orleans, that France is indebted for the new dynasty, it may be interesting to the reader to give, from the authority of one who was with the prince during the memorable days, and the truth of whose statements may be relied on, some account of what took place on that occasion.

"M. de Talleyrand," continued C., "was, at the time, in his hotel in the Rue St. Florentin, and, on the first day, before any one could foretel the issue of the terrible drama which had just begun, far from displaying any degree of sympathy for the resistance which was beginning to be organized in every quarter of Paris, he looked on with a feeling of terror at the unchaining of the populace; for he had often said, that "neither experience nor prophecy could ever calculate the chances of a

dawning revolution. Would the people, when once let loose in the revolutionary arena, renew the bloody scenes of '93, or would they pause before the memory of that dread, terrific epoch? Could any one, at that hour, have dared to hope that Paris would have given to the world the sole example in history of a roused and angry multitude, staying its tide of fury even in the midst of intoxicating triumph?

"M. de Talleyrand *did not* foresee this possibility. The souvenirs of youth came back upon his age, and showed him the people conquering, using and abusing the right that conquest gives; pillaging the hotels of the *noblesse*, and, in bloody triumph, sparing no superiority, either of station, rank, or fortune; and, it might be also, if the truth were known, trembling himself to be the first victim of popular rage; for he knew that the people loved him not: he had been the instrument of the restoration of the Bourbons. Such were the thoughts which occupied the mind of M. de Talleyrand during the first of these days, and, with those who can bear witness to the uneasiness which he betrayed during those hours of doubt and terror, he is perfectly exonerated from the suspicion of

having *prepared* the change which was taking place before his eyes.

"On the second day, the 28th, when the people were combating against the king's troops for the possession of the Hôtel de Ville, while the air was filled with the old and dreaded sounds, the cannon's roar, the tocsin's boom, his confidence in the success of the king's power of defence forsook him at once, and he then pronounced the memorable sentence which has since become familiar to the readers of French literature: 'The cannon which is fired against the people cannot but shake the sovereign's throne.' At the moment when the tocsin announced the triumph of the people at the Hôtel de Ville, he looked at the clock upon the mantelpiece. It was then just upon the stroke of five. 'A few minutes more,' exclaimed he, 'and Charles X. is no longer King of France.'

"One good instance of his presence of mind occurred at this very moment, for he turned to his valet-de-chambre, and made him immediately collect together the men-servants of the hotel, and take down the words 'HOTEL TALLEYRAND,' which flaunted in large golden characters over the gateway, the feudal pride of other times.

"I still maintain the perfect conviction that, even up to the very hour of which I speak, he was undecided as to the course he would adopt; he was evidently waiting for the issue of the struggle. Public rumour has lent him a *bon mot*, which is certainly in his style, although I was with him the whole day, and did not hear him pronounce it.

"'Hark! the tocsin ceases—we triumph!'

"'*We!* who, mon prince?'

"'Chut, not a word! I will tell you that to-morrow.'

"If his secret wishes were really in favour of a new order of things, with his habitual prudence, he made it a duty to conceal them; and he spent the whole of the second day fixed at the windows of the drawing-room of the hotel, which looks into the Place Louis Quinze, sending every now and then his emissaries into the divers quarters of Paris, to bring back accounts of the progress of the revolution. MM. de Broglie, Bertin de Vaux, and Sébastiani were with him, and all, excepting the prince, were of opinion that the king would attempt, before the morning, to re-enter Paris at the head of his troops. *He* knew the character of the man too well either to hope or to fear this decision.

"On the 29th, however, when M. de Talleyrand began to be convinced that the cause of the revolution was triumphant, that the liberal deputies, Casimir Périer, Laffitte, Lafayette, all, not only pronounced themselves in its favour, but sought to direct the insurrection, and to place themselves at its head, he felt at once the immense advantage that such a demonstration would give to the Chamber of Deputies over the Chamber of Peers; and his only thought during the whole day was to collect together at his own house the few men of intelligence among the peers of the opposition, in order to balance, in the public opinion, by some patriotic declaration, the influence already gained by the deputies, from the position in which they had placed themselves—that of 'Defenders of the Charter.' But all the efforts of the prince were unavailing. The great number of his friends, such as Pasquier and Molé, hesitating to declare their opinions thus openly, in dread of the return of Charles X., declined taking a part in the protest of the deputies. M. de Talleyrand was pained to the quick by this want of decision, and foretold, with an accuracy which has since become manifest, all the bad consequences which would fall upon the

Chamber of Peers, from having remained passive during this eventful crisis.

"By early dawn on the 30th, the people were, however, masters of Paris—of all the military posts —of all the barricades of the Tuileries—of the Louvre, and of the hôtels of the ministers. The royalist troops had withdrawn, and were encamped round St. Cloud, where still lingered, in faint hope, in inert expectation, Charles X. and his court.

"Suddenly a report arose, and spread like wild-fire through Paris! The old king, alarmed at the consequences of a civil war, had decided on immediate flight! M. de Talleyrand, at first, would give no credence to the rumours. He could not believe it possible that the king, being still surrounded by 12,000 devoted troops, would so soon abandon the chances of the game, and, before he declared himself, he sent to St. Cloud to ascertain the truth of the statement. The return of the messenger staggered us all. He brought word that Charles had fled from St. Cloud, and was proceeding with all expedition to Rambouillet. At that moment, M. de Talleyrand's doubts were at an end; he decided at once upon the course he would pursue; and, in this circumstance, as in so many others wherein he has been

accused of changing his politics to suit the hour, he might have answered as he had once done before, 'It is not I who desert the king—it is the king who deserts us.'

"Now came the time when the high intelligence and marvellous sagacity of the prince were brought into action, and, I hesitate not to repeat, saved the country. M. de Talleyrand dispatched to Neuilly, with all possible speed, a little billet written with his own hand. The bearer was a person of high courage and great integrity, and was charged, should he fall into danger, or be arrested at the barrier, to destroy the billet. He could not in honour read its contents, but saw that there were but few words traced upon the paper. They were addressed to the king's sister, Madame Adelaide. This messenger was commissioned to place the billet himself in the hands of the princess, and to tell her that the Prince de Talleyrand conjured her to warn the Duke of Orleans that not a moment was to be lost—that the Duke might reckon upon his aid, and that he must appear immediately—that he must come at once to Paris, to place himself at the head of the movement, or all would be lost without recall. Above all, he was only to take the title of

Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom, which Charles had conferred upon him before leaving St. Cloud:—he implored him not to manifest any other intention. In this advice the old diplomatist was reserving for himself a back door to creep out at in case Charles should march on Paris.

"Madame Adelaide received the message with ill-dissembled joy. With woman's *astuce*, however, she declined giving an answer in writing, as there were no writing implements in the room, and she dared not ask the servants for them; being aware that the whole house was filled with spies, she knew not whom to trust at such a moment. She even took the precaution of returning the paper received from the prince, fearing either to retain or destroy it, lest its traces might be discovered. The messenger then took back this verbal message: 'That her brother would be most grateful for the assistance which Prince Talleyrand thus offered—that he was for the moment *absent from Neuilly*—but that she would immediately have the prince's message conveyed to him, and would herself use her most earnest endeavour to persuade him to go at once to Paris.' The Duke of Orleans was, before night, established in the Palais Royal, and, in a few hours after his arrival, the walls of the

capital were covered with placards and proclamations, signed LOUIS PHILIPPE, LIEUTENANT-GENERAL OF THE KINGDOM.

"Still, there remained an immense distance to overleap before the crown could be grasped by the lieutenant-general. On the one hand, the republican party were howling with rage, to find the republic vanishing still further from their embrace —that dear-beloved republic, for whose sake they had rushed so blindly on the chances of a revolution. On the other side, the great mass of the citizens remained calm, and indifferent to the rise of another Bourbon. As to the party calling itself Carlist at the present day, it must have been very small indeed, for, in the hour of danger, it was invisible! The Orleans party, meanwhile, comprised all the leading members of the Opposition in both Chambers. At the head of this party was M. de Talleyrand, who, without exactly declaring himself in favour of the new dynasty, already directed all its movements, by the advice which he found means to transmit through a person in his confidence; for the barricades, by which the streets were still rendered impassable, prevented him from going in person to the Palais Royal.

"Nevertheless, M. de Talleyrand beheld with

uneasiness the republicans beginning to profit by the kind of interregnum which followed the flight of Charles X. This party, with the perseverance which still characterises it, were every hour gaining ground. Already the populace, which, during the three days had shown itself so magnanimous, so disinterested and generous, was beginning almost to murmur at its victory, and to lend a greedy ear to the furious declamations of the jacobins of 1830. A little longer hesitation, and the re-establishment of royalty would have become a thing impossible without another direful struggle, in which it is not quite clear that the Orleans party would have been victorious. Already were the piazzas and the gardens of the Palais Royal echoing with inflammatory appeals to the sovereign people, to stand forth while yet it was time, and to take into its own hands the government of what were virtually and morally its own interests. The approaches to the Chamber of Deputies, where the famous declaration of the 7th of August was concocting, were crowded with fierce and savage-looking men, calling with bloodthirsty cries for the establishment of the Republic, and vociferating horrible menaces against those deputies who would dare to set up another throne;

above all, to seat upon it another Bourbon. A crisis was imminent. The government which was sitting at the Palais Royal had the utmost difficulty in restraining the people, by dint of intoxicating its self-love and vanity with the praises bestowed with liberal hand each morning in the journals. The people were beginning to discover, meanwhile, that the victory which they had gained, and for which they were so lauded, gave them neither bread for their starving families, nor work whereby to earn it; and they who, after having broken the sceptre of royalty, thought to be freed from all control, could not support, without shuddering, the restraint which a government, unsanctioned by the popular voice, sought to impose upon them.

"Dreadful rumours of revolt and massacre were circulated on all sides, and the family of the Duke of Orleans were not without alarm for the very life of its chief. The moment, then, was come at last —the moment to decide. Charles X. was taking, without resistance, the road to a new exile. From that quarter, then, all danger ceased. The deputies, now gathered together in sufficient number to deliberate, had come to offer the crown to the lieutenant-general of the kingdom. M. de Talleyrand

was consulted at this crisis, and he it was who caused the faint resistance of Louis Philippe to cease, and induced him to place upon his brow the crown offered by the people, and he it was whose opinion decided the king to go at once to the Hôtel de Ville, there to receive publicly the sceptre of France, and to swear allegiance to the Charter. This truth may be relied on; and, moreover, M. de Talleyrand, in order to give to the new power the sanction of his old experience, appeared at the public reception of the Palais Royal for the first time since the revolution.

"Such was the part played by M. de Talleyrand in the revolution of 1830. Immense it was, if judged by its results, but neither studied beforehand nor rehearsed, as it has been so often unjustly asserted since that day. This part, indeed, was so entirely *impromptu*, that many persons of the intimate circle of the prince know that, more than once, M. de Talleyrand has let fall a regret that Charles, in his blind folly, should have destroyed in three days the whole fabric of the Restoration, which had been looked upon by all Europe as the masterpiece of Talleyrand's diplomatic works. The weakness of seigneurial pride,

too, the only one which I think he ever possessed, will sometimes cause him to sigh over the wreck of that principle of legitimacy which he had been at so much pains to re-establish in favour of the Bourbons, a principle which he still considers necessary to the repose of the country, perhaps compromised for many generations by the events of the three glorious days. The lesson which such regrets imply, conveys, to the thinking mind, its own moral.

CHAPTER [illegible]

SEIZURE AND CONFINEMENT OF THE SPANISH PRINCES AT VALENÇAY.

WHILE my friend had been thus discoursing of kings and revolutions, we had, after crossing a part of the park, turned in the court-yard, where stood the stables. I knew that the prince cared but little for his stud; I was surprised, therefore, when C. pulled the cord of the huge bell which hung at the entrance. At the sound, the groom, who was standing in the court, evidently knowing for what purpose he was summoned, flung back the wide doors of an outhouse near the gate.

"It is fit," said C., laughing, "that, as our discourse is all of chance and change, of fallen kings and falling governments, we should now behold the very type of these: although, fallen and faded as it

is, it may be regarded as the great lion of Valençay."

Saying this, he stepped into the building, and I followed, and beheld not, as I had imagined, some fine high-mettled racers, the gift of this or that sovereign, presented in gratitude for the services of the diplomate, but a sight far more interesting—a sight which carried me back to the days of Philip V. and Cardinal Olivarez.

It was the carriage which had conveyed the Spanish princes across the frontier to Valençay, in 1808, and which they had left behind them under peculiar circumstances. The vehicle is of most antique and extraordinary construction. It must, indeed, be coeval with the Spanish monarchy; a huge, uncouth piece of Spanish workmanship, like nothing on earth but our Lord Mayor's state barge, or the car of Juggernaut. The panels are emblazoned in gold and silver, with the arms of all the royalties of Spain, and all the quarterings thereof besides. When new, and on a sunny day, these panels must have blinded the beholder. The roof is adorned in the quaint old style, with massive cornices and rich carvings. The hangings within and without were of crimson silk damask, and even

the very wheels, although rude and ponderous, were curiously wrought and richly gilt.

The circumstances of the huge machine having remained at Valençay are curious and amusing. When the morning arrived which was to send Ferdinand and his brother forth from their place of exile, to resume the crown and royalty in their own land, the huge carriage which had brought them to Valençay was drawn from its *remise*, and laden with the moveables which had been collected during their long captivity. There are a few persons living now at the château, who well remember the morning of the departure, and they will tell you all the ludicrous circumstances connected therewith, some of which would form valuable acquisitions to collectors of "whims and oddities."

"The day was fine: not a cloud obscured the horizon; all nature was gay and smiling. The old coach, roused from its long repose, and furbished up with new hangings and velvet cushions, had been dragged round to the *perron* to be loaded. This task being accomplished, the princes and their suite had squeezed themselves into the interior; the little pages stood upon the steps, and hung by the door, after a fashion which may still

be seen in ancient prints; and, as for the valets and footmen, they clustered on behind, pell-mell, clinging to each other as best they could. Some say this ponderous machine contained at that moment no fewer than seventeen persons. In Spain, it had always been set in motion by eight stout mules, but upon this occasion six brisk and capering post-horses were attached to it, with good stout ropes, too, for it was evident that it would require a strong pull to get it under weigh.

"The beautiful princess, the fair hostess, with her whole court, was standing on the *perron*, in picturesque and wailing grief. There were clouds on many a youthful brow, and the tears fell like rain from many a bright eye, for the princes had been beloved during their long and weary captivity, and in return they had felt a depth of gratitude towards the soft beguilers of their weary hours. Some there are who say that time hung not so heavy on their hands, as it might have done had they remained amid the dull and heavy splendours of the Escurial. It is certain that, upon this occasion, when they should have been joyous, they displayed faces of such weeping melancholy at either window of the vehicle, that you would have thought

them going forth into ex[illegible] still more dreary, instead of being about to resume their glorious birthright. They sobbed forth faint farewells, which were echoed back by the weeping beauties on the *perron*, until the uncle, old Don Antonio, in this case more impatient than his youthful nephews, urged the postillions to their greatest speed, with promise of princely reward.

"At length the cry of '*En route!*' burst from the guide; whips were cracked with energy tremendous, and handkerchiefs waved in graceful agitation. A louder sob burst from the ladies on the *perron*—a cry of absolute despair echoed from the carriage—the horses pulled—the postillions shouted—they even let fly sundry choice oaths which are ever ready at hand—the old coach groaned and creaked—that was all—the spurs were dug into the flinching sides of the poor animals—the old coach swayed to and fro, and swung with a rumbling sound—but it moved not! In vain did both man and beast toil and pull at the cords—they all broke one after another, and not an inch of ground was gained.

"I have heard it said that no scene of the broadest farce could surpass in ludicrous effect

that which took place, when it was discovered that it would be impossible, by any human means, to drag the machine even so far as the gate of the courtyard. The royal party were compelled to alight forthwith. All the baggage had to be unpacked, and they left Valençay in a much more humble conveyance,—a good, modern travelling carriage, belonging to the prince. I have often wondered if Don Carlos, when fighting in his Biscayan mountains, ever remembered that moment, and if so, whether with a smile or with a sigh."

I looked at the carriage with great interest, for there it still remains, just as it was rolled back to its old station under the *remise*. Through all the changes of the country from which it had rumbled over the frontier, laden with its royal freight, has it stood silently falling to decay—the gay emblazoned panels blistering and fading in the damp, and the splendid hangings all moth-eaten and falling to tatters—a curious memento, and one which even in our own day may find its way to some museum. It certainly would not disgrace any collection of "*pièces curieuses*," however rare and valuable.

C. told me that, "not being at Valençay at the period of the arrival of the Spanish princes, he

could not bear witness to the effect which the sudden seizure of their persons, the breach of faith of Napoleon, and the strict captivity in which they were held, had produced in the country. He had, however, seen much of them during the time of their stay, and gave me some curious anecdotes concerning them. Ferdinand, and his brother Don Carlos, were both young, almost mere lads, at the time, and, at first, as it may well be supposed, they were overcome by grief and rage at being thus torn from their country by fraud and violence; but, after some little while, they grew reconciled to their fate, and even, with true youthful volatility, preferred it to the awful state and grandeur of the Spanish court, which, in these days, still maintains the same absurd etiquette that had for ages rendered it the terror of foreign ambassadors, and gained for it the nickname of the "grave of the gay."

"It is an error to suppose that the smiles and fascinations of the Princess de Benevent herself had any share in this sudden change of sentiment, for she was already past the age to captivate the fancy of her youthful guests; but there were some among her fair maids of honour for whom the young princes would gladly have sworn never to

return to Spain, not even to rule over it in splendour.

"They were a curious collection assembled at Valençay. First and foremost came the two princes, Don Ferdinand, Prince of the Asturias, and Don Carlos, his younger brother. Of these, more anon. Then came old Don Antonio, brother to the reigning King of Spain, and uncle of the two boys, guardian likewise of their welfare and their morals. The latter was a true Spaniard of the *vieille roche*; such a character as may be found in the old Spanish novels; ignorant and haughty as the hidalgo of Columbus's day, yet *bonhomme* withal, credulous and unsuspicious as a child.

"At the same time with the Spanish princes and their suite, arrived at the château the commandant Henri, delegate and spy of the police, commissioned to keep close watch over the youthful heroes, and not to suffer them to leave his sight either night or day. I really think that the presence of this man was the only source of uneasiness or annoyance that the royal personages experienced during their stay. He was a hard and vulgar individual, whose life had been passed amid scenes of strife and treason, and he fulfilled the duties allotted to him with

a pertinacity and minuteness which embittered the lives of those entrusted to his charge. Of course, from his position about the persons of the princes, he became at once the object of their hatred and contempt, and if in wantonness of power he often inflicted useless vexation, they in the wantonness of youth managed to revenge themselves with great ingenuity. Some of the scenes to which this state of things gave rise were most amusing. One of the greatest delights enjoyed by Don Ferdinand was, at the hour of prayer, night and morning, to compel the attendance of the commander, to whom, from his republican and anti-religious principles, the idea of bending to a Supreme Being was odious, and who would growl forth his republican oaths in cadence with the chant of the officiating priest. He had been wounded, too, in his youth, and in his age was stiff-jointed besides, so that to kneel was absolute agony.

"Don Ferdinand would provide amusement for the whole company, by assisting him with mock condescension to drop upon his knees, and would convulse them with laughter at the sly shoves and friendly pinches which this operation would give him the opportunity of bestowing. In vain the

commander would seek to excuse himself from attending at this precise hour. No excuse would be taken; his royal charges would rather wait any length of time than dispense with his company. The annoyance grew so great for the poor commander, that all his days were embittered by the torture of that single hour, and the poor tormented princes were amply revenged by this gentle and gentlemanlike chastisement.

"Don Antonio, the dear good old soul, was at first much admired and venerated by every one around him, for the assiduity with which he visited the library of the château. Many and long, indeed, were the hours he spent there, much to the edification of those who, beholding the utter ignorance in which the princes had been brought up, began to hope that so much study and meditation on the part of the tutor would in good time turn to profit and improvement for his pupils. But alas! soon were the fond believers undeceived. The good old man suddenly ceased his visits to the library, and, on being questioned by the Princess de Benevent as to this sudden alteration in his mode of passing his time, he replied, with composure, "Thank God, my work is over, and I can

smoke my cigaretto in the shade beneath the piazza, without the fear that the morals of my pupils may be corrupted by those naughty books."

"'Nay,' replied the princess, 'if your Excellency had but pointed out which were those you thought objectionable, I would have had them removed; my servants should have done it long ago, and saved you all this trouble.'

"'Oh, do not mention trouble,' replied the Don, with calm politeness; 'besides, removing the books would have spoilt your library. It was only the vile Latin authors whom I dreaded; but fortunately, neither Don Ferdinand nor his brother can read them, and the engravings were soon removed by my care and trouble. I promise you, madame, not one remains, in all those books the Prince de Benevent pointed out to me as being those most studied by the youth of this country.'

"Judge of the dismay of the princess on hearing these words. Instant search was made among the volumes of which he spoke, some of the most rare and valuable editions in the whole collection. It was too true. The pious Don, in terror for the morals of his pupils, had taken the pains to tear out the beautiful engravings, which in many cases

formed the chief value of the books. Every one the least objectionable was gone. The beautiful Ovid, the magnificent Strasburg Bible, and many others of equal value, were stripped, and may be seen to this day, as positive proofs of the *ignorance crasse* in which the royal family of Spain were at that time reared.

"The ignorance of Don Ferdinand would have been remarkable even in a convent of Spanish friars. He *could* read, indeed, but made it his boast that he never did so, having a 'valet in his service who understood all the mysteries of science.' This was *verbatim* his own expression. He was of quiet and taciturn habits, however, and loved to spend his time in cutting out with scissors divers little devices, with which he enclosed the *bon-bons* he loved to present to the ladies of the princess's court. He was fond, too, of searching in books; but it was soon discovered that Don Antonio's alarm was but too well founded; the royal youth loved books for the sake of the 'pretty pictures' they contained, and nothing more.

"The younger brother, Don Carlos, was far less gentle in his manner, and less favoured in person. His great passion was the chase, in which the

commander loved to indulge him, as he himself partook of the same taste.

"But if," said my friend, "you would like to know more of their deeds and doings, I will give you a sketch of all the circumstances which took place, from the time of their *enlèvement* at Bayonne, to their return to Madrid. It was given me by a gentleman of their suite. It may amuse you, and you may read it at your leisure."

Just at the moment my friend uttered this promise, the breakfast-bell sounded a joyous peal across the park, and we hastened to obey its summons. C. being engaged during the morning, gave me the paper he had promised, to amuse my *ennui*, and, in the hope that its contents may afford to others the same delight they occasioned me, I shall give them to the reader.

The little manuscript which my friend placed in my hand, had been found in the château after the departure of the young princes of Spain from Valençay. It was written in a fair hand, and bore the following title:

"*The Secret History of the Intrigues, which ended in the Seizure and Imprisonment of Ferdinand VII. and his Brothers at Valençay.*"

The *cahier* was found in the library, and as there was but ONE person of the whole suite who ever went thither, it is well known by whom it was written, a gentleman of truth and honour, at the very moment I am now writing this, holding a high situation about the person of the Queen of Spain, Isabella. The manuscript began as follows:

"In the month of March, 1807, the Prince of Asturias, who was in active and secret correspondence with Don Juan d'Escoïquiz, Archdeacon and Canon of Toledo, his former preceptor, sent to him at Toledo, where he then resided, a person in his confidence, named Jose Marrique. The prince forwarded by this person a letter to be delivered into M. d'Escoïquiz's own hand, wherein he spoke of his suspicions concerning the ambitious views of the Prince of the Peace, who, in consequence of obtaining daily, either from the king or queen, some new dignity or favour, became more and more powerful, particularly in possessing, as he did, the command of the army, the navy, and the militia. Already the rumour had arisen that Charles IV., whose health was declining fast, had appointed him Regent of the Kingdom. Once regent, the death of the king would open a new

career to his ambition. The character of the Prince of the Peace, and his proximity to the throne, tended to excite alarm in the friends of the royal family.

"M. d'Escoïquiz, in dismay at the contents of the prince's letter, flattered himself that it would be easy to undeceive the king and queen with regard to the real character of the Prince of the Peace. He immediately penned a letter, which was to be delivered by the Prince of Asturias into the hands of the queen, in which he displayed, with great eloquence, all the danger in which the royal family stood, by the blind confidence the king reposed in the Prince of the Peace. This letter, full of reason and of truth, so much alarmed the Prince of Asturias, that he could never find courage to present it to his mother, and he merely copied it in his own hand. Somewhat ashamed of his own want of resolution, he wrote to M. d'Escoïquiz, that he judged it impossible ever to enlighten the queen, and that he thought it would be easier to persuade the king to reason, if he could get an opportunity of speaking with him *tête-à-tête*.

"The worthy Canon of Toledo immediately set about inditing another letter, which he endeavoured

to adapt to the weak understanding of the king, and sent it to the prince, who waited in vain for an opportunity of giving it in private to his father. This document was copied, like the former one, by the prince himself, and likewise locked up in his desk, where they were both found on the seizure of his papers some time afterwards.

"The Prince of the Peace, who suspected that the reserve and taciturn habits of the Prince of Asturias served to conceal hostile intentions towards himself, sought every means of undermining the fidelity of the young prince's household, and made a proposition through the queen to marry him to Donna Maria Theresa, his sister-in-law, second daughter of the Infant Don Luiz. This princess was remarkable for her great beauty and ambition, and had already exhibited an inclination for gallantry. The prince, who knew but little of her beyond her personal attractions, had already given his consent to this union, when suddenly, the ambition of the Prince of the Peace had become more insatiable than ever, and the marriage was broken off.

"M. d'Escoïquiz, on perceiving that every means of gaining access to the king and queen had failed,

and that the marriage with Donna Maria had failed also, began to imagine that the only hope of support for the Prince of Asturias would lie in his marriage with a princess of the family of Bonaparte. M. d'Escoïquiz grew, in fact, quite enraptured with the scheme, which he himself had planned, and, wishing to preside over its execution, he left his quiet retreat at Toledo, and came to reside at Madrid. There he became acquainted with Count Orquez, a gentleman much attached to the Prince of Asturias, and communicated to him his alarms and his future plans. In one of their secret conversations, M. de Orquez informed him that Don Diego Godoï, the father of the Prince of the Peace, was distributing money among the garrison of Madrid, and had thus corrupted a great number of the officers. A colonel of dragoons, Don Joaquin Jauregui, gave them intelligence of all that transpired, and informed them that to every officer of distinction, Godoï had said, 'You see the miserable state into which the kingdom has fallen—the Bourbon dynasty is degenerated—the king cannot live much longer—the prince is a weak, capricious fool. Some change is necessary—we reckon on your aid.' Throughout the whole of Madrid, the secret agents

of Godoï were at work night and day. The Abbé Stata, librarian of St. Isidore, had been imprudent enough to spread inflammatory writings, the object of which was to prove to the Spanish nation, that in the existing crisis, the only hope of salvation lay in an entire confidence in the judgment and experience of the Prince of the Peace.

"In this state of affairs, M. d'Escoïquiz was aware that not a moment was to be lost, and that all true friends of the throne must at once league together for its defence. His first step was to obtain from the Prince of Asturias a kind of letter of credit, which authorized him to speak confidentially with the Duke del' Infantado, a young man of exalted birth, of great integrity, and chivalrous courage, holding a high place in public esteem. Armed with this letter, written in the prince's own hand, he appointed a meeting with the duke, and together they swore fidelity to the throne, vowing respect even to the absurd blindness of the king, and merely concerting the measures to be taken in the house, when the king, whose health was declining daily, should breathe his last, at which moment it would be the easiest thing in the world for the Prince of the Peace to conceal the death of the sovereign as

long as it should please him so to do. The hatred and suspicion which he had so craftily engendered in the bosom of the Queen against her son, had compelled her to fill the palace with troops, all devoted to herself and to Godoï. It was his design when, by the rules of etiquette established at the Spanish court, the exact moment arrived for the heir to the throne to appear at the bedside of the dying king, to have the young prince arrested, and to make him sign by force the necessary decree, which would place the whole power in the hands of the favourite. The Duke del' Infantado and M. d'Escoïquiz judged then, that the only means to guard against this outrage, would be to provide themselves with a decree, signed and sealed by the new king, by which the whole power, civil and military, would be placed in the hands of the Duke del' Infantado, placing also beneath his command the Prince of the Peace himself.

"Empowered by this decree, the Duke del' Infantado, on the first signification of the approaching death of the king, was to declare his power, take possession of all the military forces, and to appear in the city and in the royal palaces, habited in the costume of Generalissimo of the Kingdom,

with full intentions to arrest immediately the Prince of the Peace, if [redacted]duct of the latter gave any cause for umbr[redacted] [redacted]coïquiz drew up this decree, and ha[redacted]d to the prince, with the necessary inst[redacted], be[redacted]ng him to copy it with his own hand, and to fix his own seal upon the paper. The prince complied with the whole of those directions, and the letter was placed at once in the hands of the Duke del' Infantado, who was to preserve it carefully until the moment arrived when it would be required. The act was complete, signed according to Spanish usage, '*Yo el Re*,' and a vacant space left for the date, which was to be filled up by the Duke del' Infantado at the moment of the King's death.

"About the middle of the month of June, M. d'Escoïquiz received another letter from the Prince of Asturias; in it was announced that, through the medium of Don Juan Emanuel de Villena, his first equerry, he had received an important billet, signed by Don Pedro Giraldo, tutor to the Infant Don Francisco, and that this billet was written by an individual belonging to the French Legation. It contained the announcement of a most important and secret communication, which it was the wish

of the French ambassador, M. de Beauharnais, to make to the prince. M. d'Escoïquiz, whom the latter had consulted with regard to the line of conduct which he ought to adopt, was of opinion that the prince's reply should be peremptory—that 'he meddled not with public affairs, nor held interviews with public men.' Meanwhile, he undertook to discover if the message really came from the French ambassador, or was merely a trap laid by Godoï to condemn the young prince. This tried and valued friend, never at a loss, had soon invented a pretext to call upon the ambassador, to whom he was unknown. He requested permission to present to M. l'Ambassadeur the first volume of an epic poem, to be entitled 'The Conquest of Mexico.'

"The ambassador, without appearing surprised at the sudden literary reputation usurped by M. d'Escoïquiz, answered with courtesy that he would receive with pleasure the book and its author. After a few observations relating to 'the Conquest of Mexico,' some few remarks on the state of affairs bringing each of them nearer to the object they both had in view, M. d'Escoïquiz frankly questioned the ambassador on the subject of the billet which had been delivered to the Prince of

Asturias, and begged him, as a point of honour, to tell him the truth concerning it.

"The ambassador feigned a certain embarrassment, denied being the author of the billet, yet wished it to be understood that in reality he was; said that a message from an ambassador to the heir-apparent would scarcely have been admissible, but declared he felt much esteem for his royal highness, and that he would be greatly pleased by the permission to pay his court, *en particulier*, to the young prince. By all this specious reasoning M. d'Escoïquiz judged of the truth, and at once told him, without further disguise, that the prince firmly believed that the message came from him.

"'Then why have you not brought me a *written* message in return?' said M. de Beauharnais, involuntarily betraying himself; whereupon M. d'Escoïquiz, laughing, replied, 'That *written messages could be denied*, therefore a preconcerted signal would, in his opinion, be more efficacious;' and, before the conclusion of the interview, it was agreed that, as the court was in a few days to return to Madrid, the ambassador would present himself, as usual, at the head of the *corps diplomatique* at the reception of his royal highness, and that the prince

would ask him '*if he had ever been at Naples?*' and that, on turning as he would leave him, to pass to another ambassador, he would take his handkerchief from his pocket and wave it as he passed.

"On the 1st of July, the ambassadors were received by his royal highness, who supported M. d'Escoïquiz by giving the preconcerted signal. Two days after this, M. d'Escoïquiz had another interview with M. de Beauharnais, who bade him rely on the sentiments of affection which Napoleon had ever felt towards the Prince of Asturias, and his readiness to maintain his cause against the Prince of the Peace. It was then that M. d'Escoïquiz thought it proper to bring forward the question concerning the marriage, and even went so far as to leave to Napoleon the choice of the princess of his own family whom he would prefer to place upon the throne of Spain. The utmost secrecy was sworn to on both sides, M. de Beauharnais promising to write immediately to Paris, in order that proper measures might be taken with regard to the king, so as to prevent any imputation of intrigue being laid to the charge of his son.

In consequence of the surveillance which was

exercised by Godoï over every movement of the French ambassador, it was agreed that M. de Beauharnais and M. d'Escoïquiz were to meet for the first interview in a secluded spot of the gardens of the Retiro. It was about twenty days afterwards that M. d'Escoïquiz received an intimation that he would be expected during the hour of siesta, when they would have little fear of surprise, at the place which had been appointed. Here M. d'Escoïquiz learnt, with the greatest astonishment, that the answer which the ambassador had received from Napoleon was perfectly puerile and insignificant, never even alluding to the marriage; and M. de Beauharnais, attributing this silence to the absence of any *written* communication on the part of the young prince, advised M. d'Escoïquiz to persuade him to write directly to Napoleon. (Was this a snare?) It is certain that M. de Beauharnais *must* have received some positive instructions, which he did not choose to reveal until the prince had further committed himself, and he suffered M. d'Escoïquiz to return to Toledo in disgust.

"It was on the 30th September, 1807, that M. d'Escoïquiz received a letter from the ambassador, in which were quoted, as an extract from a private

communication of Napoleon's, the following words, each underlined: '*I beg not, neither do I sell—I act not without security. Have you received any official communication touching this affair?*' The forms of political quackery employed in this letter induced M. d'Escoïquiz once more to return to Madrid; again did he meet the ambassador at the Retiro; again did M. de Beauharnais endeavour to persuade M. d'Escoïquiz to prevail upon the prince to write directly to Napoleon; and the good canon, having the welfare of the prince at heart, yielded at last, and promised that such a letter should be written.

"Now, the Prince of the Peace was all this time perfectly aware of everything that was passing in the house of the ambassador, through the medium of the spies with whom the latter was surrounded, and he caused the king immediately to write, himself, to Napoleon, which epistle was instantly despatched to the Spanish ambassador in Paris, the Prince de Masserano, with orders to convey it, the very moment of its arrival, to the emperor, in whatever place he might chance to be. It was natural enough that, with the dilatory character of the Prince of Asturias, his father's letter should arrive

long before his own. It reached the emperor at Fontainebleau, and excited much astonishment and indignation. It was full of bitter reproach against Napoleon for having encouraged a secret correspondence with the young heir to the Spanish throne, telling him beforehand of the despatch he was about to receive from the prince, *and of all that the letter would contain.*

"That letter was full of protestations of devotion to Napoleon, and of admiration of his brilliant qualities, of the before-mentioned proposal of marriage, and of supplications to the emperor to aid in rescuing the country from the hands of the Prince of the Peace. It was upon the strength of this letter that the Prince of the Peace, gained over by Napoleon, persuaded the old king to allow of the entry of French troops, ostensibly to compel Portugal to separate her cause from that of England—it being understood that it was merely as a passage to that country that these troops were allowed to cross the line.

"On the 27th of October, at ten o'clock at night, the Prince of Asturias was arrested in the Palace of the Escurial, under the accusation of having conspired to rob his father of the throne, and of

having sought to assassinate him. The act of arrest went on to say, that these particulars had come to the knowledge of the king *through an unknown channel*, and that he would be tried for the crime of high treason. M. d'Escoïquiz and the Duke del' Infantado were arraigned as accomplices. They were confined in the dungeons of the Escurial, deprived of all communication with each other, or with the world without, and two sentinels were stationed at the door of each cell.

"During the process of the prince, the number of French troops had increased to more than double. It was observed that they had taken up positions entirely contrary to the direction they had professed to follow, and that they were each day drawing nearer to Madrid, and the people, in every country more clear-sighted than its rulers, began to feel alarm at the intrusion. It was necessary to give some diplomatic explanations concerning these singular marches, but these were so ill received, that the Prince of the Pèace was compelled to order back the Spanish regiments already on their road to Portugal. The ambassador feigned total ignorance, and, after the lapse of a few days, received instructions to say that, by commanding

the retrograde movement, the Prince of the Peace must be prepared to allow of an increase of French forces. In the fear of a counter-order, these latter troops, by forced marches, soon took possession of the whole frontier of Catalonia, Navarre, and Guipuscoa. The court wishing to appear free from anxiety, negotiations went on as usual between the two governments. Meanwhile, the country was invaded, and the Prince of the Peace began to lose somewhat of his overweening confidence in the disinterested friendship of Napoleon, but, like all weak-minded persons, thought that everything would be saved by gaining time. He accordingly proposed a journey into Andalusia on the 13th of March, and that very same night he gave orders for departure; but it was impossible to keep the preparations so secret as to escape the observation of some of the hangers-on who always throng about royal palaces. The orders all along the road for relays of horses, the departure of the luggage, the sudden disappearance of Madame Yudo, with her children, all these circumstances united, had produced an uneasiness among the people, and roused the feeling of hatred and indignation towards the Prince of the Peace, which had slum-

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bered, but had never been extinguished, and it was declared that he was counselling the king to desert Madrid.

"In these popular movements, it needs but a spark to light the brand, and in less time than could be conceived possible, a crowd had assembled before Godoï's residence, with loud and furious cries demanding justice on the oppressor of the people. Godoï escaped, thanks to his foresight in preparing for a day of reckoning. He had planned and accomplished a secret retreat beneath the roof of his palace, where he remained concealed while the work of pillage and devastation was going on around him. It was not till the 19th, that he was discovered by a sentinel, who could not be bribed to facilitate his flight. He was secured, and conveyed through the streets in a piteous plight.

"The king, justly deeming that the Prince of Asturias would have greater influence with the crowd than himself, was reduced to implore his son to intercede in favour of the unfortunate minister. This the prince, with true Christian feeling, in spite of all cause of grievance which he himself had to complain of, immediately consented to do; and, suddenly appearing on the balcony of

the palace, he promised the assembled multitude that, if they would disperse, the Prince of the Peace should be tried and judged according to the law. This address had the desired effect; the crowd retired, and Godoï was taken prisoner to the barracks of the *gardes du corps*, where, by one of those strange coincidences by which it would appear as if Providence sought to remind ambitious men of a day of retribution, he was locked up in the very chamber which he had occupied when a simple private soldier in that identical corps.

"It was after this event that the Prince of Asturias was received into favour, and with him, the friends who had been so devoted to his cause. M. d'Escoïquiz was appointed to superintend all the negotiations with the French ambassador, as it was thought in council that M. de Beauharnais, after what had taken place, would find himself more at ease with M. d'Escoïquiz than with any other of its members."

It was immediately after these events that Charles IV., by his own spontaneous act, abdicated the throne in favour of his son, who took his father's place as Ferdinand VII. All the circumstances which followed are fully detailed in the

work of M. de Pradt, and need not be repeated here. The details of the manuscript tally in every respect with those given by that author, and I shall therefore content myself with giving to the reader the gossiping portion of the narrative; the hitherto *unpublished* history of one of the most striking and audacious *coups-de-main* of modern history.

"From this hour was that *coup-de-main* evidently planned and meditated, and one scarcely knows which to admire most—the fond and simple security of the Spaniards, or the boldness and contempt of all social respect which characterized the proceedings of the French. The ambassador announced at length the arrival of the Emperor Napoleon at Bordeaux, and was pleased to renew the protestations of friendship on the part of his master, with which he had already beguiled the faith and credulity of the poor young Prince of Asturias. It was not, however, until the 8th of April that King Ferdinand decided on despatching his young brother, Don Carlos, to meet the emperor, with instructions to proceed even to Paris, should he fail to meet him on the road. Don Carlos was the bearer of a letter from Ferdinand to Napoleon, in which, after speaking of the strict

alliance which it was the interest of both countries to maintain, and having again urged the subject of his marriage with one of the emperor's nieces, he announced his intention of going forward to meet his imperial majesty, as soon as he should have approached the frontiers of Spain.

" Don Carlos took his departure on the 9th of April. The news of the departure of the emperor from Paris, reached Madrid on the 11th. Ferdinand, meanwhile, worn out with the persecutions of the Grand-duke of Berg and General Savary, quitted Madrid, for Burgos, on the 14th. His council advised him to this measure; perceiving that he had not the means either of attack or defence, it was thought to be the wisest plan to throw himself into the arms of Napoleon.

" It was now observed that not a single negotiation had taken place with the new king, and that he had not been formally acknowledged by Napoleon, who had never taken the trouble to answer any of his letters, and now, too late, it was beginning to be feared that the frequent conferences which had taken place between Charles IV., the queen, and the Grand-duke of Berg, through the medium of the Queen of Etruria, had for their only

aim the replacing of Charles upon the throne, by causing him to protest against the act of abdication. This secret intrigue, of which M. de Monthion, adjutant-general, had been the messenger, and the Queen of Etruria the instrument, produced the act of the 21st of April, in which Charles IV. speaks thus:

"'I protest and declare that my decree of the 19th of March, by which I abdicated the throne in favour of my son, was extorted from me by force, and the desire of preventing great disorder in my kingdom, and the effusion of the blood of my well-beloved people, and ought therefore to be regarded as an act null and void.

"'YO EL REY.'

"The natural consequence of this protest was of course the application to Napoleon for help against his son, thus pronounced a rebel and usurper. Ferdinand had authorized a junta, under the presidency of his uncle Don Antonio, to take charge of the government during his absence. He had with him a single squadron of the *gardes du corps;* and two companies of foot had orders to

await him at Burgos. He was three days upon the road, and found every post occupied by French troops, among which he could not discern a single Spanish soldier. At Burgos, he found Marshal Bessières, in command of 10,000 men. The marshal courteously offered the use of the relays which had been provided for Napoleon, for the conveyance of Ferdinand to Vittoria, which offer was accepted. Here the unfortunate prince found a corps composed of two hundred dragoons, and a *compagnie d'élite* of fifty gendarmes, commanded by Colonel Fleury.

"The prince remained three days at Vittoria, and lodged at the Hotel de Ville. Savary grew impatient at this long delay; his orders were to bring the prince on to Bayonne, *nolens volens*. Every measure had been taken to carry him off on the 19th, if he had not listened to the last endeavour at persuasion on the 18th. But the king removed every difficulty, by announcing his intention of once more setting forward on his journey. At nine o'clock on the morning of the 19th, at the moment of his getting into the carriage, a popular instinct had drawn together a vast concourse of people at the door of the Hôtel de Ville; a uni-

versal cry of execration arose from the multitude as the young prince mounted the vehicle; the traces were cut, and the mules unharnessed. Ferdinand was compelled to harangue the populace, and succeeded in quieting them by assurances of his perfect safety; the furious cries which had been heard gave place to tears, and, soon afterwards, he was allowed to depart; but in consequence of the delay, did not arrive at Irun until eleven o'clock at night.

" Here the king and his brother were lodged at the house of M. d'Alozabal, outside the town, and they were guarded by a Spanish regiment. General Savary did not arrive at Irun until the 20th, at seven in the morning, owing to an accident which occurred to his carriage. Thus the king and his council were left for eight hours alone, without their French escort, guarded by Spanish troops, in the house of a Spaniard, situated on the sea-shore, where a number of boats were lying attached to stakes planted at the bottom of the garden. General Savary, immediately on his arrival, rushed like a terrified culprit to the house where the king had alighted. Oh, joy!—he found him still sleeping quietly in his bed.

"At eight o'clock, the *cortège* set out for Bayonne, and in that place was accomplished one of the most extraordinary events which, perhaps, has ever taken place in the history of nations. At the moment when the king passed over the frontier, the carriage was surrounded by detachments of the imperial guard. Their numbers appeared rather extraordinary for a mere guard of honour. This reflection, vague enough on its first adoption, changed to a sinister foreboding, when, on passing beneath the triumphal arch which had been thrown across the road, they beheld the following words inscribed amidst the boughs of laurel with which it was decorated:—'He who can make and destroy Kings at pleasure is himself more than a King.'

"Now were the princes of Spain beyond the jurisdiction of their own country, and in the power of Napoleon. Between Vivau and Bayonne, Ferdinand found the Infant Don Paulo, who, with three Spanish noblemen, had come to greet his unhappy brother. The king requested them to join him in his carriage, and then he learned, with the greatest surprise, that Napoleon himself had declared to them on the day before, at *ten in the morning*, that they might never expect to return to

Madrid, and that one of his own brothers was about to occupy the throne of Spain. I have marked the hour at which this declaration had taken place, because it must have taken eighteen hours to get the news conveyed to Irun, and at Irun, as we have seen, there had been ample time and opportunity for the escape of the princes.

"Nothing was left but resignation to their fate; the carriage was drawing near to Bayonne; at half-past twelve o'clock, the princes arrived in the good old city, and, a few moments afterwards, the king received a visit from Napoleon in person. In this interview, doubtless by design, the conversation was insignificant, excepting that it was observed that, in the style of Napoleon's address to the king, there existed an affectation of addressing him in the third person, using the pronoun *elle*, which might be applicable in the French language either to majesty or royalty.

"Ferdinand hastened to pay his respects to Napoleon, in grateful homage for this first visit, and the emperor invited him to dine at the Château de Maroc. The Dukes de San Carlos, de Medina Cœli, and del' Infantado, were also invited. The

Prince de Neufchâtel was the only Frenchman present at this dinner.

"On the next day, Napoleon granted a private audience to M. d'Escoïquiz, and bade him comprehend that he was determined to alter the dynasty which had sat upon the throne of Spain; forgetting that he had a thousand times declared that his own existence was incompatible with the fact of any sovereign of the house of Bourbon being allowed to remain on any of the thrones of Europe. He alleged in excuse of his proceedings the proclamation of the Spanish government at the period of the battle of Jena, which proclamation, he said, had been regarded in France as a measure of war. He then added, in a loud, fierce voice, that it would be useless to seek to alter his determination, for that nothing on earth could make him change. He paused after the utterance of these terrible words, and then spoke, in a softened voice, of the misfortunes into which the young princes had fallen, and regretted for their sakes that he was compelled to take such harsh measures, wishing them to be assured that nothing but the necessity of perfecting his system could have induced him to

behave thus hardly towards them. He even went so far as to offer to the young king, upon condition that he would renounce all pretensions to the Crown of Spain, the kingdom of Etruria, with one year's revenue, to be spent in forming a household, one of his nieces in marriage, and, in case he himself died without heirs, a right to share his property with his younger brothers.

"M. d'Escoïquiz, who was a brave and clever man, answered to all this disloyal cant as became a Spaniard and a gentleman, without acrimony and without passion, stating that it was not in the power of the emperor to compensate the king for the loss of the crown of which he was depriving him, and appealing at great length to every feeling of honour and humanity in the emperor's bosom. Napoleon listened to all without betraying the slightest mark of impatience, but merely replied that he had been for a long time engaged in examining the question on every side; that his present determination was dictated by the *system* which he had in view, and which, although against the feelings of his heart, he must continue to persevere in. The canon then retired. The result of his visit was submitted to the other friends of

Ferdinand. M. de Cevallos was *alone* of opinion that every proposition of Napoleon should be refused, and that all communication between the two sovereigns should be suspended; and he exacted, seeing the great responsibility which the council was incurring with the Spanish nation, that each member should certify his opinion in writing.

"Is it not strange that the courage of these men should have been roused just at the moment when they had need of nought but resignation? But so it was: their Spanish pride had taken umbrage at last, and the Duke del' Infantado was commissioned to announce to Napoleon the prince's intention of naming a plenipotentiary to negotiate in writing every subject which it might be the emperor's pleasure to have discussed. The proceeding of Napoleon on this occasion was highly characteristic of the man. He sent for M. d'Escoïquiz, and told him, in blunt and coarse language, that, if before eleven o'clock that night the councillors did not bring the formal renunciation of Ferdinand to the throne of Spain, and the formal demand of that of Etruria, he would treat with Charles IV., who was to arrive on the morrow. M. de Cevallos implored the young king not to

accede to any proposition of Napoleon; but, the day after, M. d'Escoïquiz ventured to speak again concerning Tuscany, when Napoleon answered abruptly, 'Par Dieu, mon cher, il n'est plus temps!'

"On the 30th, at four in the afternoon, Charles IV. and the queen, arrived at Bayonne. Napoleon had despatched one of his chamberlains to compliment them at Irun. In the same carriage with the king was the Princess d'Alcudia, daughter of the Prince of the Peace. The entry of the king and queen was most brilliant. The princes were allowed to go forward to meet them, and returned to Bayonne in their suite.

"The arrival of Charles completely altered the face of things. He consented to all that was required of him. Napoleon sent a message, through M. d'Escoïquiz, to Ferdinand, to the effect that, as King Charles IV. had refused to adhere to his abdication, it was the duty of the Prince of Asturias to give in his renunciation at the instant. The young prince, through weakness, consented to this mark of respect to his father, although aware that in this proposition some sinister design of Napoleon must be concealed. The first act of authority

on the part of Charles was to name the Grand-duke of Berg lieutenant-general of the kingdom, thus excluding Don Antonio, who had been called to Bayonne by an order of Charles himself. Don Antonio had yielded without a murmur; and an aide-de-camp of the Grand-duke of Berg escorted him to Bayonne, where he arrived on the 25th. He had incurred some danger on the road, for the people had unharnessed the mules of his carriage at Tolosa, and thrown down cart-loads of rubbish on the bridge. Don Antonio had owed his safety entirely to the courage of the captain of cuirassiers who commanded his escort.

"Soon after the arrival of Don Antonio, the Queen of Etruria joined the royal party, bringing with her the Infant Don Francisco. It was at this moment that the princes were greeted with the astounding information that they were immediately to depart as prisoners for Valençay, and here they arrived on the 18th of May.

"Their entrance into the château will never be forgotten, for it left upon the mind of every beholder the most singular impression. The princes (all excepting Don Antonio) were young, and blooming with health and innocence, while every-

thing about them, the habiliments which they wore, the carriages which conveyed them, the liveries of their attendants, brought back the memory of past centuries. The very coach from which they alighted might have belonged to Philip V. This air of antiquity reminded the bystanders of their grandeur, and rendered their position still more interesting. They were the first Bourbons who had touched the soil of France after so many years of troubles and disasters, and it was with tears that they were received. The Princess de Talleyrand and the ladies of her suite crowded round to greet them on their arrival, and by their attentions succeeded in diverting the grief which they expressed at this cruel and unjustifiable exile. It was the object of every inhabitant of the château to render this exile as easy to be borne as possible.

"On the very morrow of their arrival, the young princes were assured by all they saw, that Napoleon reigned not either in the château or in the park of Valençay. No one was permitted to appear before them without an order from themselves, and it was agreed that no one should approach them save in court costume. Such marks of honour and respect were pleasing to young men who had been

brought up amid the ceremony and etiquette of the Escurial. Every hour of the day was allotted to some pursuit. In the morning, mass at the chapel —then the *siesta*—then driving or riding in the park, and then again to prayer. In a few days, the young princes found themselves more at home than they had ever done in their father's palace at Madrid. They had never been accustomed even to go out to take an airing without a ceremonious permission from the king; they had never been allowed even to walk together, it not being etiquette for more than one royal prince to be absent from the palace at a time. It is a singular fact, that the amusements of the chase, riding on horseback, and dancing, had been strictly prohibited at the court of Spain. It was at Valençay that Ferdinand fired his first shot.

"The young princes were all delighted at the change in their habits, and at the kindness with which they were surrounded. The *garde de chasse* who accompanied them through the park, had served the Prince de Condé; the riding-master who was employed to teach them to ride, had been for years in the *grande ecurie*, and had given instructions to Madame Elizabeth; so that they were con-

stantly reminded of individuals of their own family. Boucher, the cook, was continually employed in concocting detestable Spanish ollas. The terrace before the château was converted for their amusement into a *salle de bal*, where they would sometimes join in those dances of their country, which require no art to follow the movements or the step. Guitars were left in every corner of the garden, and the kind-hearted Dussek himself would devote his time and talent to the execution of simple Spanish airs, which they would love to hear, as being the only music they could understand.

"But all these amusements were only minor points of interest in the history of their lives. It was at the hour of prayer, when the bell of the chapel rang at sunset, that all the etiquette of Spanish form was most strictly adhered to. Every soul in the château, whether visitor, attendant, gaoler, or guard, was compelled to attend at the chapel; and it was really a touching sight to behold prisoners and gaolers, oppressors and oppressed, kneeling together before the same God, laying aside their bitterness and enmities before Him who was one day to judge them all."

"During this period of uncertainty, while his

European allies were still dubious as to the manner in which his brother Joseph would be received as king of Spain, Napoleon was in a state of constant terror and alarm with regard to the prisoners of Valençay; he could not hear of the place, nor of the persons who inhabited it, without giving way to transports of rage, and to the utterance of injurious epithets concerning those whom he had already wronged and oppressed. One day, the young prince received a billet, couched in the following terms: 'Prince Ferdinand, in writing to me, addresses me as his cousin. Let him understand that such address is ridiculous, and let him henceforth simply call me "SIRE."'

"From this time forward, the existence of the princes seemed to have been forgotten; and all that can be said of them during the five years that they spent at Valençay is, that they existed. The treaty which fixed their departure to Spain was negotiated at Valençay, and they left the place full of unspeakable gratitude for the kindness and princely generosity of its owner."

Just as I had finished the reading of this tale of wonder, C. entered the room. "What think you

of this strange statement?" said he. "The history of your own country, all wild and furious as it is, cannot offer an example of such audacity as this." I was fain humbly to confess our inferiority in these matters. "But know you," said I, "the opinion of Prince Talleyrand with regard to this affair?"

"He has been calumniated even in this," was C.'s reply, "and accused of having advised the measure; whereas his indignation on learning from Napoleon himself the step which had been taken, dictated the boldest and most eloquent speech which, perhaps, ever fell from his lips: 'Sire,' said he, warmly, 'a young man of family (*un enfant de famille*) may gamble away his last farthing—the heritage of his ancestors—the dower of his mother—the portion of his sisters—and yet be courted and admired for his wit—be sought for his talents or distinction—but let him once be detected in *cheating* at the game, and he is lost—society is for ever shut against him.' With these words he turned upon his heel, leaving the emperor pale and quivering with rage, and vowing vengeance against the bold speaker of the unwholesome truth. Such was the real opinion of the Prince de Talley-

rand concerning this unprincipled transaction—the expression of the man who has been accused, not only of having been the instigator of the whole proceeding, but of having aided in its execution. ‘ Et voilà comme on ecrit l'histoire !’”

CHAPTER IV.

CAGLIOSTRO—VOLTAIRE—THE MARQUIS DE J——.

It was the hour of noon, and C. had kindly come to fetch me to the luncheon-room, where I found the guests all assembled, listening greedily to the conversation of the prince, who was that morning *en verve*, and relating with great good-nature the anecdotes which he had promised us on the preceding evening; the first claimant to be satisfied was, of course, by right, the youthful duchess, to whom he had held out hopes of the history of his famous visit to the great Cagliostro, and which I will give to the reader.

"It was just at the dawning of the new lights which had arisen on the political horizon," began the prince, "or rather, I should say, perhaps, with more justice, at the first extinguishing of the old

beacons which had served to guide our ancestors for ages, that so many new doctrinaires and charlatans of every kind came swarming in crowds to Paris. Those were, indeed, most troublous times. Every brain seemed reeling with political vertigo —every heart seemed to beat thick and fast, with an ardour hitherto unknown in the annals of any country on the face of the globe. With the warm and passionate temperaments, enthusiasm had reached to frenzy, while, with the cold and passionless, it smouldered, a hidden fire, ready to burst out into lurid flame upon the first occasion of excitement.

"Among the many quacks and impostors who abounded at the time, none was more conspicuous than the famous Cagliostro. He had arrived from Italy under extraordinary and mysterious circumstances; his coming had been preceded by rumours more strange, more surprising still, and his door was besieged at once by all the rich and idle, the marvel-loving portion of the population of Paris. Among the rest, I am ashamed to confess that I was one of the most ardent. I was very young at the time, and had not acquired that distrust of all pretension which years alone can give. Many

months, however, had elapsed before I could obtain the audience I so much coveted. Thousands of persons had to pass by right before me, and it was said that, immediately on his arrival, his books were so filled with the names of the highest and mightiest, that, had he been *just*, and received them each *in turn*, the candidates at the *bottom* of the list would have known their future by experience long before he could by any possible means have foretold it.

"I myself knew an officer in the regiment de Flandre, who, being quartered at Metz, and not being able to obtain from his colonel leave of absence, threw up his commission, in order to keep his appointment with Cagliostro on a certain day in Paris, so fearful was he of losing the valuable information concerning the future, which the magician had to give him.

"I cannot even now repress a smile, when I remember the awe and terror with which I entered the presence of the conjuror. I had not dared to go alone; M. de Boufflers had kindly consented to accompany me; and yet my embarrassment was not wholly dissipated even with the prospect of his company; so fearful was I of missing the object

of my visit, that I had wasted so much time in thinking of all the questions which I meant to propound to him, as to have even written many of them upon my *calpin*, with the intention of consulting it in case of need. It was already dusk when we were admitted into the awful presence of the conjuror; not quite dark without doors, yet sufficiently so within to require the aid of tapers. The antechamber was filled with impatient applicants, who railed at us as we passed through the door of the chamber where the wizard was holding his incantations. The whole scene was very like those introduced in the early Spanish dramas, and inspired one with the most awful forebodings as to what was about to follow.

"We found the magician in his study. He was just at the moment engaged in dismissing two poor patients, to whom he had given advice gratuitously. The one was a cripple figure, whose distorted and haggard countenance formed a most fitting accessory to the scene of devilry; the other was an old mendicant friar, afflicted with the shaking palsy, whose restless limbs and hesitating speech made him appear as if under the influence of some wizard spell.

"As soon as we entered, Cagliostro led his guests to a door at the farther end of the chamber, which was veiled by a thick tapestry, and, opening it without the slightest noise, ushered them through it into the passage beyond, and then, closing it again with the same attention to silence, returned to the spot where we were standing, and, placing his finger on his lips, pointed towards a still and motionless figure seated in one corner of the room, and which, from the obscurity that reigned around, we had not observed on our entrance. The figure was that of a female, covered from head to foot with a veil of black crape, so long and ample that it disguised even the form of the fauteuil in which she was seated.

"Cagliostro bade us take seats at a table covered with green velvet, upon which were placed divers mysterious-looking instruments of torture, sundry queer-shaped bottles and diabolical volumes, and then, standing up before us, in solemn and biblical language inquired wherefore we had sought him, and what it was that we desired to know. Such was the effect of the sudden questioning, the mystery of the interview, the silence and the darkness, that Boufflers, who was to have spoken first,

and who had the reputation of being a *raffiné de premier ordre*, a *roué de la Régence*, was quite overawed by the whole scene, and could find no words to answer the summons, but sat stammering and hesitating, while I took the opportunity of examining slowly and at leisure the wondrous adept.

"Cagliostro was then a man in the very flower of his age, of exceedingly prepossessing appearance. His person, although small, was so well and firmly knit that its proportions seemed those of a much larger man. His countenance was remarkably keen and penetrating, being formed of a succession of sharp angular lines, which gave him a look of cunning that he would willingly have disguised, and with which the solemn tone and mysterious aspect were altogether at variance. His sharp piercing eyes I shall never forget; they absolutely seemed to light up the obscurity of the chamber, and, as they flashed from the one to the other of his visitors, they seemed to belong to some wild bird of prey hesitating between two victims which to devour first. His beard and eyebrows were black and bushy, with here and there a streak of grey amid their jetty blackness, telling more of

the hand of woe than of the passage of time. When we entered, he had upon his head a velvet cap, which, with gentlemanlike courtesy, he doffed when he addressed us, and then I perceived that the summit of his crown was already bald, although his hair curled downward upon his neck and shoulders in a thick and silky mass. The hand which rested upon the table, and upon which he seemed to be leaning his whole weight as he stood in graceful and theatrical attitude, awaiting our communication, was small and delicate as that of a lady of the court, and shone out upon the dark green velvet as white as snow; and yet it needed not any very profound knowledge of anatomy to enable the beholder to discern at once that it was the hand of a man possessed of most herculean strength and power, so vigorous were the firm knit muscles, so well strung the tightened, cord-like nerves. I think he observed with some displeasure the curiosity with which I gazed towards it, for he withdrew it suddenly, and let it fall by his side.

"Boufflers still remaining mute, the conjuror turned to me, and asked me, in a voice which had already lost much of its solemnity, and partook of something like harshness, if I also had come un-

prepared with a subject of consultation, as, if so, we had best depart at once, and leave the field to others whose business might be of more importance, and who were waiting with such impatience without. The question roused all the courage which was left within me, for I began to fear that the magician might grow wearied, and dismiss us as he threatened, and I answered in a low voice that I wished to consult him concerning the health of a person who was dear to me. (I had already forgotten all the questions I had intended to propound, as well as the *calpin* which I had so laden with notes.)

"Cagliostro turned, and by a movement so abrupt and sudden that it made us both start to our feet, drew the fauteuil wherein was seated the veiled mysterious form of the female who had remained all this time silent and motionless, across the floor, and still the figure moved not. The feet resting on a board attached to the bottom of the fauteuil, moved with the rest, producing an indescribable effect. At the present day, when the mysteries of mesmerism have become common household talk, and somnambulism has been made a general *voie de guerison* for every complaint

under heaven, all this will appear vain and puerile ceremony; but, at the period of which I am now speaking, they were familiar but to the initiated few, and Boufflers and I, poor ignorant novices, were struck with awe and wonder.

"'What is it you seek to know?' said Cagliostro, resuming once more his solemn and theatrical air, and, drawing a little aside the veil of black crape, he bent towards the ear of the female, and whispered a few words which we could not understand.

"I was so afraid at the moment of losing, as my friend Boufflers had already done, the memory of what I had to say, that I replied hurriedly, never thinking of myself, nor of the thousand and one questions which I had predetermined to ask—'I wish to learn the cause of the migraine of my friend the Marquise de ——'

"'Chut,' interrupted Cagliostro. 'The name is of little import. What see you?' added he, in a loud deep tone, turning to the veiled figure.

"'I see a fair and beauteous lady,' replied a sweet soft voice from beneath the veil. 'She is attired in a dress of sea-green Padua silk, her powdered hair is wreathed with rosebuds, and she wears long and splendid eardrops of emerald and topaz.'

"Boufflers caught my arm, with a smile, which the excitement of the moment had converted into a grimace, for he knew well enough the person for whom I was so anxious, and knew, moreover, that there were certain nights on which she wore the emerald and topaz suit, and that this very night was one of them. The veiled form continued, in the same low voice: 'The lady is pressing her hand to her brow at this very instant. Is it with pain, or is it with care? She is waiting for some one, for now she rises and looks at the clock upon the console, and now she goes to the small side-door to listen.'

"'Enough, enough,' said I, in my turn, growing impatient; 'tell me at once what it is that ails the lady, and what may be the remedy.'

"The figure spoke aloud no more, but whispered long in Cagliostro's ear, and the latter, turning to me, said, with ease and *àplomb*, 'The lady's migraines are caused by overwatching and anxiety—the *cure* is easy, and must be applied at once—the *cause* will be removed in time.'

"He pushed back the fauteuil into the corner whence he had drawn it; the veiled figure by which it was occupied remained still and motion-

less as death. He then opened a small door in the wainscot, belonging to a cupboard filled with shelves, containing bottles of all sorts and sizes, and drew from it a phial, which he filled from a jug of that which stood upon the floor, and having performed various '*passes*' and evolutions over it, he handed it to me, bidding my companion and myself to lose no time in retiring, for others were waiting outside.

"His dismissal of us was as abrupt as possible, scarcely, indeed, consistent with politeness. 'You have told your ailments and your griefs—you bear with you the never-failing cure—now begone.'

"With these words he opened the same low door through which he had let out the two visitors whom we had succeeded; and Boufflers and I passed out, obeying, without a word, the gesture of the magician, which pointed towards the passage beyond.

"Such is the history of my first interview with the great Cagliostro. To you, who behold daily the strange and varied examples of magnetism, my story will perhaps appear pale and puerile; but you must remember that, at the time, the thing was new, and, notwithstanding all that has been dis-

covered since, none has surpassed him; even to this very hour, the secret of Cagliostro has not been discovered. It is supposed that ventriloquism was much employed by him in his various *tours de force.* Perhaps it was made the agent of deception in my own case, and the figure veiled with black crape may have been a mere puppet set up to delude the credulous. The circumstance which would seem to favour greatly the suspicion of imposture is, that, as Cagliostro never employed twice the same agency, the *consultant* could never come *prepared* to watch and detect the machinery of his experiments, and in fact, being always taken by surprise, had no leisure to think of anything else than the consultation he had come to hold. Again, how *could* the adept have known, by natural means, that the Marquise de Br**, whom he had not suffered me to name, was young and beauteous —that she possessed eardrops of emerald and topaz, which mixture of jewels was peculiar, and that she would wear them on that very night? All these reflections completely bewildered me, as I hastened on to the Opera, certain that the marquise would be there, full of curiosity to see if her dress and appearance would correspond with Cagliostro's

description. Boufflers could not help me, nor suggest a single idea to solve the mystery, so absorbed was he in the memory of the strange scene he had been witnessing—so completely wonder-struck by the silence and mystery of the whole proceeding.

"We arrived at the Opera just as the curtain was about to rise. I shall never forget the performance, so linked is it in memory with that night's adventure. It was Gluck's opera of 'Alceste.' Boufflers and myself took our places in the parterre, immediately below the loge of the marquise, which was empty, and remained so for some time; and I can assure you that, when, in the midst of one of the most pathetic scenes of the opera, I heard the door of the box open, and a valet-de-chambre announce, as was the usage among the fashionables of the day, 'Madame la Marquise de Br**,' we both turned sharply round. She entered, muffled up to the chin, and evidently suffering greatly from her old enemy the migraine, for she held a screen before her eyes to shield them from the glare of light, and bent her head upon her hand as soon as she had taken her seat.

"'Look! she *has* roses in her hair,' exclaimed Boufflers, all aghast.

"It was true enough the roses were there; and *I* could see even more, for the eardrops of emerald and topaz caught the light of the girandole in front of her box, and played before my eyes in a most tantalizing manner.

Presently the marquise, overcome by the heat, withdrew her cloak and muffles, and stood revealed to us in the full light, exactly as she had been described to us so short a time before. The dress of sea-green Padua silk, looped with roses, seemed completely to choke poor Boufflers, as he stood gazing on her in mute amazement. So far, the wizard had told us truth. Since his day, the same experiment has been repeated, and in thousands of instances has succeeded. You have all, I doubt not, some little story of the kind to tell, much more striking and interesting than mine, but the sequel of my anecdote, I think, may be unique, so completely did the adventure jump from the sublime to the ridiculous at a single bound.

"At the conclusion of the piece we both repaired to the box of the Marquise de Br**. She was suffering greatly from her migraine, and greeted me ironically, observing that I was '*bien aimable et bien galant*—that she had waited for me to escort her to the Opera, and had been compelled

to depart from home alone. After the performance, we all adjourned to her hotel. I had completely reinstated myself in her good graces, by the promise of a complete cure for her migraine. The gentlemen of the company, however, all voted that a glass or two of champagne should be tried first, before the dear marquise was put to pain and torture by any of the diabolical remedies of the sorcerer Cagliostro. The vote was carried, and the marquise compelled to submit to their prescription first, which she did with the greatest grace, and good-humour, using every effort to appear gay, although evidently suffering much pain at the very moment.

I will not attempt to record all the good things which were uttered at the *petit souper*, nor all the *idées folles* to which the champagne gave birth. Boufflers was quite himself again, and had recovered all his wonted vivacity, all his mad gaiety, and kept us in a roar of laughter by his wicked sallies and pointed jokes concerning our visit to Cagliostro. He counterfeited with such excessive humour the whole scene as it had passed before his eyes, that no one could have imagined him to be the same individual who had sat quaking

in fear and awe before the very man whose power he was now deriding in such exquisite glee.

"Of course, the phial and the contents became soon the objects of attack, and I was petitioned on all sides for a view of them. By the permission of the marquise herself, I yielded to the clamour, and it was handed round amid the commentaries of the laughing guests, until Boufflers proposed that the remedy should at once be tried in the presence of us all, so that, if it failed, we might at once go and give Cagliostro the *charivari* which he would so richly deserve; and, if it succeeded, we might publish its virtues and the compounder's skill throughout the world.

"It was not till I had uncorked the phial, and was about to pour it into a glass, that it all at once occurred to me, that, in the hurry of our dismissal from the presence of Cagliostro, I had entirely omitted to ascertain whether the liquid was to be taken as a medicine, or to be applied externally. To the eye, it was nothing but pure water from the fountain, it possessed neither smell nor colour, and the greatest curiosity was excited to behold its marvellous effects. At length, by the suggestion

of the marquise herself, who was growing weary of our *badinage*, it was decided that there would be less danger in misapplying it externally than in swallowing it, should it prove pernicious; and as I was chosen to be the operator, I poured a small quantity of the water into the hollow of my hand, which Boufflers guiding, so that not a drop was spilt, I placed gently as possible over the forehead of the marquise, pressing it there, but certainly not with violence, and, supporting the back of her head with the hand that was free, held her, thus awaiting the result.

"The marquise closed her eyes, but uttered not a word, and there was a moment's silence among the clamorous group bending over her with such eager curiosity to witness the effect of the miraculous cure, when suddenly it was broken by a loud convulsive shriek from the marquise herself, which was almost echoed by many of those present, so sudden and startling did it burst from her lips. 'Take away your hand! For God's sake, take away your hand!' exclaimed she, in a voice of agony; and, starting to her feet, she endeavoured, with all her strength, to pull my wrist downwards. But strange to tell, not all the efforts of the mar-

quise, nor those I used myself, could tear away my hand from her forehead! No words can describe the sensation of terror with which I found myself not only deprived of the faculty of withdrawing my arm, but drawn by some powerful attraction closer and closer still, until it almost seemed as if the fingers were about to bury themselves in the flesh.

"At first, as you may suppose, it was imagined by those present that the whole event was a jest, and the piteous shrieks of the marquise, and my own supplications for assistance, had at first been greeted with roars of laughter; but when it was found that the affair was serious, the company began to take alarm. It was not, however, till the unfortunate marquise sank back in her chair, fainting and exhausted, that the Duc d'Argenton, recovering from the consternation into which the discovery of the extraordinary event had thrown the whole assembly, seized my wrist in a nervous grasp, and tore it by main force away, drawing with it large patches of skin from the forehead of the marquise, upon which the imprint of my touch remained in bleeding characters. My hand was torn and lacerated likewise, and the pain was unbearable. I bound it in my handkerchief, and

gave all the assistance in my power towards the recovery of Madame de Br * *, who was conveyed to bed, still in a deep swoon. We all remained in the saloon, which had so lately been the scene of our mad gaiety, with downcast looks and subdued voices, waiting the report of the surgeon who had been sent for to apply the proper remedies to the wounds of the marquise, who was not pronounced out of danger till towards morning. We then dispersed, with the firm determination of having the mystery cleared by Cagliostro himself as soon as possible. Boufflers instantly repaired to M. de Sartines, the head of the police, and he furnished us with two officers, and with all power to make search at the magician's house, or take any steps which we might deem necessary.

"Cagliostro received the visit with the greatest *sang froid*, and, without the slightest resistance, allowed the officer to prosecute his search among the various tools and utensils which he employed in his calling. The large jug from which he had taken the liquid contained in the phial which he had given to me, still stood in the same place as on the preceding day. There remained but a few drops, for his patients had been numerous, but

these the officer poured into a bottle and conveyed to the nearest chemist, who laughed in the man's face, and pronounced them to be clear water. To my bitter reproaches and angry exclamations, Cagliostro replied, with perfect calmness, that the liquid was pure and innocent when he placed it in my hands, and that if it had grown pernicious it must have been owing to the guilty passions or to the evil sympathies of those who had used it. No further explanation could be elicited, and the affair, which made a great noise at the time, remains a mystery to this hour. As for me, I lost an amiable and valued friend, for the Marquise de Br * *, either through fear of the ridicule which attached to the adventure, or from memory of the pain which she had suffered, could never endure me to approach her after that. She would not even grant me an interview in order to express my regrets at the strange accident which had happened. She avoided me when by chance we met in public, scarcely even returning my salutation but by a cold and formal acknowledgment. She refused all the efforts of our mutual friends at effecting a reconciliation, and, wearied with my importunities (for I really felt anxious to do away

the unjust impression), she ended by returning my letters of apologies and supplications unopened."

The prince paused thoughtfully. The story was at an end.

"Did there remain a scar or trace of the wound which the marquise had incurred?" said Madame de V——.

"She carried the mark of that night's adventure to her grave," replied the prince; "a long, narrow scar, which all the art of the coiffeur could not disguise. The corner of one her exquisitely traced eyebrows, too, had been torn off, and never grew again; but she replaced it with great effect by an *assassin*, which she wore there ever after."

The prince paused again for a moment, and then added, while a smile full of malicious glee, of exquisite *finesse*, passed across his countenance, "The *girandole* eardrops of emerald and topaz she not only wore no more, but had the cruelty to bestow upon her maid, who adorned herself with them at the next Opera ball, whither she was sent by her mistress to *intriguer* me, while the lovely marquise replaced them at times with long pendants of snowy pearl, emblem of innocence and simplicity, and I soon began to observe, with bitter-

ness, that, on these occasions, whether I proposed Opera, ball, or play, Boufflers always had some 'particular engagement' which prevented him from joining our party."

Many were the comments upon this adventure, and many the discussions upon the possible contents of the phial, which it would be absurd to suppose consisted of nought but pure water. Some defended Cagliostro, others were loud against him, when the dear Duchess de V——, fearing that the time might be lost in dissertations on mesmerism, suddenly exclaimed, "Dear prince, you who have seen so many great men in your time, did you ever see Voltaire?"

"Yes, indeed, fair lady, I *did* once behold M. de Voltaire," (the prince always called him so to the last day of his life,) "and my interview with him is connected in my mind with a curious fact. The narrative of my adventure may perhaps amuse you. It was in 1778, the year before his death, that I had the singular good fortune to obtain an audience of the great philosopher. He lived at the corner of the Rue de Beaune and the quai which has since been called by his name. He had intimated to my friend, Champfort, his great desire

to become acquainted with me, and I, who all my life had been tormented with the wish to behold this greatest genius of the age, the master spirit of his own time, the guide of that which was to follow, did not need a second bidding.

"The philosopher received us with great urbanity. He had been prepared for our visit in the morning, for he still loved dearly all kinds of form and ceremony, and, to the very last day of his life, set a higher price upon his title of M. *de* Voltaire (which, by the by, was usurped) than on the popular and honourable abbreviation of 'Voltaire,' *tout court*, by which he was designated long before his death. M. de Voltaire was seated on the edge of his bed, attired in one of those short loose dressing-gowns much worn at the time, and which displayed his spindle legs and shrunken feet in all their unveiled ugliness. Never have I beheld a form so withered, so diminished; every vein in his whole frame was visible and defined, like those in an anatomical study. The later portraits of M. de Voltaire give a very just idea of his appearance, but they generally fail in expressing the singular look of the eyes—an expression which I never have seen in any one since that time—an

anxious, unquiet, restless look—a hungry, thirsty, keenly-searching glance (hunger and thirst of praise), and searching with avidity for admiration, which, such was the Voltairian fever of the time, he never failed to obtain, and yet, as '*l'appetit vient en mangeant*,' never wholly satisfied his craving.

"The room wherein the great man received his visitors was entirely darkened (such was his whim), save where one single shutter, folded back, allowed the light to stream in through a long, narrow aperture, immediately opposite to which he himself was placed, so that he became thus the sole object clearly visible in the apartment. And here he sat to receive visitors, although, the sun shining at the moment, the light was so strong that it must almost have blinded him. His niece, Madame Denis, '*belle et bonne*,' was seated at the foot of the bed near the chimney, attired in a dimity camisole, rather soiled, and her hair, escaping in disorder from the little cap placed on the top of her head, was tied in a fantastical *fontange* with a faded blue ribbon. She was no longer young, poor *belle et bonne*, and her sedentary life had induced a degree of corpulence which made her look older still. She had certainly forfeited all pretensions to her first

title, and there was much in her face that to a physiognomist would have given a flat contradiction to the second. She had evidently been engaged in writing from M. de Voltaire's dictation, for she had risen from the bureau, and turned to the fire, where there was placed some cooking utensil to which she soon directed her attention.

"But it was not long before I had forgotten the very existence of Madame Denis, in the interest of the conversation with M. de Voltaire himself. He spoke quickly and nervously, with a play of feature I have never seen in any man except him. His eye kindled with a vivid fire almost dazzling, as it danced in the ray of sunlight from the window, and moved about from one to the other of his listeners, rapid and quivering like the summer lightning. He had just been receiving, that very morning, a deputation from the Théâtre Français, begging permission to commence the performance of 'Zaïre' that evening with a complimentary address to himself, which permission of course the poet had granted with an enviable self-satisfaction, merely requesting that the verses should be submitted to his own inspection, and subjected to his own corrections and improvements, if any such were

needed. He was in high good humour at this mark of honour and distinction, for, as I have said before, flattery had become of more importance to his existence than the very food and nourishment of each day.

"When the great man had conversed for some little time with my friend, with whom he had been intimate for many years, he turned to me, and, after courteously expressing the pleasure which my visit gave him, he added, 'I had desired to see you, M. de Perigord, to communicate to you a fact concerning your family, which happened some years ago, and may be of importance to you hereafter. As you are the youngest of your family, you may one day like to be its chronicler.'

"He then commenced the relation of some interesting particulars regarding the Talleyrands and Perigords, intermixing, with a precision of memory quite marvellous, the different branches and connexions either by birth or marriage. All these, of course, were familiar to me, but, as it was not natural that a narrator like M. de Voltaire should ever tell a story without a point, all this preamble ended in a tale of interest and wonder which completely riveted my whole attention, and kept me in

a thrill of delight, not so much by the story itself, which, however, was full of most powerful interest, as by the irresistible charm of the diction. I can safely affirm that M. de Voltaire spoke with even more ease and grace than distinguish his writings. I think he would have made a splendid orator. His words seemed to *fly* from his lips, so rapid, yet so neat, so distinct and clear was every expression. His meaning was so precisely defined, that you never had an instant's doubt or hesitation whether you were quite sure that you fully understood him. The language of Champfort, bold and vigorous as it was—full of fire and passion—seemed to lack energy and spirit as he answered M. de Voltaire. The fire of the one was like the red beacon light, steady and strong, lurid and fierce; the other was the treacherous spark which, flying upwards in seemingly harmless sport, yet driven this way or that by the most trifling breeze, may spread ruin and devastation wherever it may chance to fall.

"We remained for more than an hour with the great philosopher. *Belle et bonne* had completed the cooking of her chocolate, and M. de Voltaire had taken it, without the slightest ceremony, in our presence. Letters had arrived, to some few of

which he had dictated short replies through the medium of his niece. I had listened in rapture to the story which I had come to hear; Champfort had already been twice confuted in argument, and M. de Voltaire obliged once to yield, before we arose to depart, and even then I think we were hurried away by Madame Denis, who reminded her uncle, with a look full of meaning at us, that it was just the hour for his siesta; which clear, unmistakable hint, of course, we immediately took, and left him to enjoy his repose unmolested. I looked at him long and earnestly as he shook me cordially by the hand, and bade me a most paternal farewell. Every line of that remarkable countenance is engraven on my memory. I see it now before me—the small fiery eyes staring from the shrunken sockets, not unlike those of a cameleon; the dried and withered cheek traversed in every direction by deep cut lines; the compressed lips and puckered mouth, round which played a perpetual, sarcastic smile, giving him altogether the air of a merry fiend. Every feature of that face is as present to my memory now as it was at that moment while I was gazing on it, impressed with a kind of sorrowful conviction that I should behold it no more.

"The event proved that I was right in my presentiment: M. de Voltaire, soon after that, denied himself entirely to strangers, and none but his intimate friends were admitted. These, however, were sufficiently numerous to form a little court around him, and to do him all the honour which he so much loved, and amid which he died, surrounded by flatterers and sycophants until the latest hour of his life."

"Now, if it is not an indiscretion, do tell us the story that he told you, prince," exclaimed the Princess de C——, as Prince Talleyrand concluded his recital; "do tell us the tale that Voltaire could think worthy a place in his memory: it must be a curious one. Try and recount it in the same manner that he used when telling it to you. I am sure you would imitate it admirably."

The prince smiled, (he never laughed,) as he replied, "Now have I to make a strange confession, for which I know you will never pardon me, and which I would willingly have been spared. Indeed, had it not happened to myself, I could scarcely have credited it. On leaving Voltaire, Champfort and myself had separated; he had taken the direction of the Tuileries, and I had sauntered

along to the Palais Royal, thinking all the while of the great man to whose presence I had just been admitted, and retracing in memory every word, every gesture, he had used during the interview. In the garden I was accosted by the young Duc d'Aiguillon, who had just arrived from Versailles, and who began in his usual rattling manner telling me a long story about the ball which had taken place the evening before in the Orangerie, of which story, mark you, I remember every word. It was about the Duchesse de Levis, a sort of court butt just at that time, and the changing of her shoulder-knot by some wag, which *plaisanterie* had caused the most laughable mistakes during the whole ball.

"When I had got rid of this wild talker, I adjourned to the hotel of the Marquise de J——, where there was *grande reception*, followed by *grand jeu* and *souper*. There I remained until a late hour of the night, alternately winning and losing considerable sums at the faro table, until I rose winner of a hundred and twenty louis d'or from Maurice Duvernay, of which he paid me seventy down, but having lost immensely, wrote an order for the rest on the back of one of the Queens of Diamonds.

"I tell you all this to show you that I can, to this very hour, account for every minute of that day, one of the most memorable of my whole life, from the moment of my leaving M. de Voltaire; and when I returned home, late as was the hour, before retiring to rest, I sat down to begin a letter to my uncle, the Cardinal de Perigord, in order to recount to him the adventure of the morning, and above all, to tell him the anecdote concerning our family, which M. de Voltaire had related, and in which I knew my uncle would take a most peculiar delight, both from the source whence it came, and the personal interest inspired by the subject. Judge, then, of the mortification I experienced upon finding that, in spite of all my endeavours to collect my wandering ideas to the one point in question, I could not recollect the story which M. de Voltaire had been at so much pains to tell me, to which I had listened with so much attention and with such extraordinary relish; I could not even write in my letter the immediate object of the story—neither detail, nor hero, nor point, (which last I remembered had diverted me beyond measure,) would present itself to my remembrance; and, after much vexation of spirit, I was fain to leave my letter un-

finished, until I had met with Champfort, whose memory I doubted not would be fully able to supply the deficiency of mine.

"I was determined to lose no time in assuring myself of this, and called upon the poet the very next day. What, think you, was his answer to my urgent entreaties that he would assist me? 'Parbleu, *mon cher*, I was too much occupied in thinking what I should say to M. de Voltaire to notice what *he* was saying to me. I heard not a word of his story, but you must own that I completely succeeded in proving the false quantity in the second canto of the Henriade.'

"He had not even heard the story! so there was no hope in that quarter, and I was obliged to content myself with the trust, that at some future day I might be fortunate enough again to meet M. de Voltaire, and induce him to tell the tale once more. As I have already said, however, I had not the good fortune to see him afterwards.

"Often and often, in the long years that have passed since then, have I endeavoured to catch the purport of his tale, but in vain. The whole scene of that interview rises at command — the welcome, the farewell, and the various arguments of the two

beaux-esprits—but that narrative, which I would often give much to remember, is gone for ever! The pre-occupation of the scene, the wonder, the delight inspired by the philosopher's conversation, have left a blank, which neither time nor reflection have ever been able to fill up; and even now I cannot remember the incident without feeling the same kind of embarrassment which I experienced on that occasion, and often surprise myself when, falling into reverie, chasing the phantoms of that hour through my puzzled brain, and endeavouring, in spite of experience, to arrest the fugitive impressions made by the story at the time, but without success."

The prince now paused, and leant back in his chair for a moment, with his eyes closed, evidently lost in thought. It was well that no one spoke, or we might have been deprived of the tale which followed, and in which, at the age I was then, I took more interest, and remembered with more pleasure, than any which had preceded it.

"How mysterious a thing is memory," said he, as he bent forward once more, and smiled upon his listeners. "The name of Champfort has brought to my mind the story, long-forgotten, of

his fellow-prisoner, a young officer formerly in the mousquetaires. His name we all know, for he is among us still, and, in short, he has promised that he will visit us, before the autumn is over, here at Valençay. He was, without exception, the handsomest youth I have ever seen; and his manners and address being remarkable for a grace peculiarly his own, and his reputation for high courage and chivalrous bearing having been fully established by one or two *affaires brillantes* in which he had been engaged, it may naturally be supposed that his *succès* of every kind left him nothing to desire. But he sought no conquest, even where the enemy held out offers of surrender; he seemed callous and indifferent to all the advances, the allurements, of which he was the object, until, such was the state of morals at that time, the ladies of the great world in which he moved began to act as spies upon each other, being fully convinced of the impossibility of his having remained so long insensible to the arts and blandishments by which he was surrounded.

"For a long time his secret remained impenetrable; his part was so well acted, his measures so well taken, that the scandal-mongers were in

despair, and the charitable souls, of whom there are always a few, were beginning to hope, when the mystery was divulged in a most extraordinary manner, and formed the town talk for many a day; and, as the story has been told with divers variations, and has got abroad under different versions, I will tell you the right one, which I had from the Marquis de J——'s own lips:

"In those days there were *fermiers généraux*, and the said *fermiers généraux* were almost always among the oldest, ugliest, richest, and most disagreeable men that the kingdom could produce. One of these, who united in himself all these superlatives, had just deceived all the cherished hopes of the ladies of the court by marrying a young girl from his own province, of noble birth, although of slender fortune, who was described as being of little beauty, and glad to acquire by marriage, wealth and station, even at the sacrifice of those other qualities in a husband which are generally sought for by young ladies.

"A year had elapsed since the return of M. de B. from Besançon, where the marriage had taken place. No one had seen his bride; she remained entirely at his country house—a delicious little 'Folie,' so

it was said, at Auteuil, close to the Bois de Boulogne. The lady had not been presented at court, and M. de B. had never requested any of his friends to visit her, so that she was at first supposed to be imbecile or ugly, and was then forgotten. But the devil's hoof, which certainly is busy with all men's concerns, trotted one day through the muddled brain of the old Dowager de Marville, and suggested to her that it would be a mighty pleasant thing to have a *feu d'artifice* in the Bois de Bologne, on some dark night when there would be no moon, and that it would be quite a funny sight to behold all the skirts of the wood festooned with coloured lamps, and adorned with flambeaux; and then she began to torment M. de B. to throw open his 'Folie' to the *élite*, and give a fête there to his friends without delay. He was a good-natured man, but, nevertheless, he took a great deal of persuading before he would consent to have his privacy thus broken in upon. He offered the ladies of his acquaintance a ball at his own hôtel in Paris, with interludes of opera-dancers. But no, the fête at the 'Folie'—nothing else would do, and the poor man was obliged at last to promise the much-desired entertainment.

His excuses had all a relation to his wife; her ignorance of the world, her innocence and utter simplicity, had all been put forward as motives for refusing, but no excuse could be taken. Give the fête he must, and the ladies, on their part, promised to treat the rustic bride with indulgence, and not to crush her by too great an assumption of superiority.

"The day of the fête arrived. The most brilliant anticipations had been formed of the entertainment to be given in such a sweet place, by so rich a man, and they were most certainly not disappointed. Every arrangement was of the best, and the whole place illuminated like a dream of fairy-land; which last circumstance did not vex the ladies so much as one would have imagined, for it helped to prove that the opinions which had been formed of the bride of M. de B. were correct in all points. She was very young, very timid, and very reserved and *gauche*, like a little *pensionnaire de couvent* as she was; and, what was worse, like all *provinciales*, who think nothing more beautiful than what is to be found in their own province, she never once expressed the slightest admiration or astonishment at anything she saw—

nay, she preserved the same cold, unmoved air, even when her husband presented to her, in due form, the vanquisher of all hearts, the renowned Marquis de J——! Some of the ladies said that she was pretty; some said not; some that she might become dangerous in time, from her paleness and the languishing expression of her eyes. Others again laughed at this opinion, and felt sure that there would never be anything to dread from her. These last expressed surprise that she had even made the conquest of her stupid old husband.

"Well, the company left the 'Folie,' enchanted with their entertainment, and dispersed at daybreak to their respective hotels, without so much as bestowing a thought either on Madame de B. or her husband. The next day, however, loud was the wailing among the ladies, for the Marquis de J—— was missing from all his accustomed haunts, where he had been used daily to charm the eyes and captivate the hearts of his fair admirers. Kind and anxious messages were despatched to his quarters, and the answer given was, that the marquis was slightly indisposed, but would appear again in a day or two. The next rumour afloat was, that old B., the *fermier-général*, had sent back

his wife to the convent from which he had taken her the year before to marry her; but no one felt astonishment at this—so cold, so awkward, so shy—not even polite to the Marquis de J——! Of course, poor old B. must feel assured he never could get on in the world with such a wife as that.

"The marquis appeared again in a few days after the fête, but much altered in appearance, with haggard, melancholy look, and sad, dejected spirits. His arm was in a sling, too, which gave rise to more tender questioning, which he sought to parry as well as he was able, by saying that he had met with an accident at M. de B——'s Folie.

"The history of the case was this. (Oh, *jeune* France, know you what even the meaning of the word 'love' is?) After the company had departed, M. and Madame de B—— had retired to their respective apartments, but M. de B——, being unable to sleep, had descended into the garden, to take a refreshing walk amid the groves, where still hung suspended the variegated *lampions*, extinguished, drowning with their vile odour the scent of the flowers. There was no moon, but the night was wearing away, and the dawn was just begin-

ning to change the pitchy darkness to a pale tint of grey, when M. de B—— thought of retiring towards the house. Just as he was in the act of mounting the steps which led to the long glass windows of his own room, his attention was attracted by the sound of footsteps on the gravel walk beneath. He was by no means a coward, M. de B—— and his first thought was of his wife, and of the alarm which a hue and cry raised at such an hour might occasion her; so after calling '*Qui vive?*' and receiving no answer, he slid gently down over the balustrade of the *perron* into the flower-garden below, feeling quite sure of the capture of the thief, as the little plot of ground belonging to his wife's apartment had no communication with the park, save by a door of which she herself always kept the key. He ran lightly over the grass and along the gravel-walk; he could hear retreating footsteps; as he advanced he was sure of this, but the bushes overhung the narrow pathway in such luxuriance, that he could not discern the form which he was pursuing. At length he reached the bottom of the path—he distinctly heard the swinging of the gate as it was opened cautiously—he made one frantic bound across the flower-bed

which skirted the path—the door *must* have been opened by some one, for it banged-to just as he approached—he heard a faint cry on the outer side, and then all was silent as the grave. M. de B—— could proceed no farther, for the key was not in the lock, and the door was closed, but he immediately sought the apartment of his wife, full of alarm concerning her, and dreading lest some thief, lured by the display of jewels which she had worn on the previous evening, might have endeavoured to force an entry through the ill-secured glass-windows of the chamber, which looked into the garden. To his utter astonishment, after having with difficulty regained his own room, and thence by the inner passages of the house arrived at the chamber of his wife, he found her up and dressed, still decked with the same jewels which she had worn at the fête. She evinced great alarm and trepidation at first, on hearing his recital, but, after a moment's reflection, declared her belief that M. de B—— must have been under the influence of a dream, as she had herself been standing at the window taking the air, and had heard no sound nor beheld any shadow pass. He asked for the key of the gate: she had mislaid it, she said, and,

the gate being so seldom used, she had not cared to search for it. So M. de B—— was fain to content himself with this assurance until daybreak, when he was determined to renew his search more minutely. The garden was torn and trampled towards the direction of the gate, but that might be by his own footsteps, for he had hurried in his pursuit after the flying thief. The gate was closed and locked, and yet there was still some mystery in the adventure, for, on the outer side, which opened into the park, the ground was stained by drops of blood, which could be traced to some little distance, and then ceased altogether. Here was more mystery still, for the gardener, on searching amid the bushes, found the key of the gate, which had so long been missing. M. de B—— instantly applied it to the lock, and the door yielded slowly and with difficulty to his endeavours to push it forward, and when at length it opened, and the obstacle was sought for, it was found to be a *human finger*, crushed and jammed against the doorpost, which, upon a close inspection, appeared to have been cut off close to the root by some rude and hurried operation.

"Alas! Madame de B——, who had remained

calm and passive during the whole of this adventure, could not support this last disclosure, but was seized with violent hysterics upon being informed of the discovery which had taken place, and in the midst of her tears and convulsions, the name of the Marquis de J—— was for ever on her lips. Of course the adventure could no longer be kept secret; the coincidence of the wound, the utterance of the name of M. de J——, determined at once the nature of the occurrence. He himself described to me the terror of his flight through the flower-garden, the agony of fear with which he hurried forth lest *she* should be discovered. It was M. de B——, who, in pushing against the door, had jammed his finger in the lock, but he cared not for the pain so long as *she* was safe and secure from all suspicion, and, disdaining to call for help, he had himself drawn forth the little pocket-knife which he always carried, and cut off the finger by which he was detained. He had never once thought of the danger or disfigurement; he did it, not complaining, but rejoicing to think that *she* was unsuspected at least, and her reputation secure. His only regret was at having lost the key of the gate, which he had dropped among

the bushes, when he had stopped to bandage with his pocket-handkerchief the bleeding wound. Had *she* not betrayed herself in her grief for him, their secret might yet have been kept. M. de J—— left Paris soon after, and travelled for some years, and Madame de B—— was despatched back again to the convent at Besançon, from which she had not been absent more than a twelvemonth in all. It is said that M. de J—— remained for ever faithful to his first love. It is certain that when he returned among us, handsome, brilliant as before, although less gay, he never sought to inspire affection in any of the fair ladies who were at so much pains to please him. He steadily refused all offers of marriage which were made him, although some of the most splendid *partis*, both maids and widows, were among the number. From the first moment of his beholding Madame de B——, which was on her arrival with her husband, while changing horses at the last relay towards Paris, at the post-house, where he happened to be halting with his troop—he had owned himself her slave; he vowed to me for years afterwards, that no other woman should ever boast of having won a thought from him, and that no other female

hand should ever feel the pressure of his own. His heart was with her who was suffering loneliness and captivity for his sake, and he regarded as sacrilege the idea of a possibility that he could break his vow of fidelity to her. At the revolution, he was imprisoned, but released *faute de preuves*, and, meanwhile, the convents having been broken up and dispersed, his first step was to secure a safe retreat for Madame de B——. Together they fled to Holland, where they remained for some years, and returned, when the storm was over, as man and wife. They lived together in happiness, and we all can bear witness to the grace and distinction which she shed around the circle she frequented, and to the respect with which she inspired all who approached her, as well as to the regret which was universally felt when she was withdrawn from us for ever. Such is the true story of the Marquis de J——: now tell me, Jeune France, will ye dare to condemn the *ancien régime*, or say that you even understand the depth of devotion and of love from which such faith as this could spring?"

The prince rose as he concluded his story, and the grating of carriage-wheels on the gravel walk

without the windows, announced the hour for the promenade. I took my seat in one of the landaus by the side of C., who had promised to show me the lions of the place, but it was some time before I could command my attention to the beauties of the scene, for the story of the prince had brought back the memory of my last *soirée* in Paris, where I had beheld a withered old man playing with avidity at *bouillotte*, and I remembered to have been startled and disgusted when he took up his cards in a *three-fingered* grasp. And now I remembered, too, that his partner had addressed him by the name of De J——.

CHAPTER V.

CHILDHOOD AND JUVENILE YEARS OF TALLEYRAND.

Our drive was delightful over the green turf beneath the arched vista of the old avenue. The rain-drops glittered on every leaf, and the turf, moistened by the shower, after the long drought, sent up a delicious fragrance beneath each pressure of our horses' feet. The prince was alone in his carriage, with his dog Carlo. There was but one person in the whole world whom he ever allowed to take the seat beside him in his drives, and she was that day absent from Valençay. There was something touching and poetical in the solitary figure as he reclined back, leaning on his cane, not gazing on the landscape, but musing, abstracted and motionless, save that from time to time he would bend slightly forward, and pat old

Carlo fondly on the neck, as if his train of thought had led him into recollections of the long attachment of the faithful animal, contrasting it, perhaps, with the treachery and ingratitude which he had met with in man.

In the poetic fervour of the moment I could not help hazarding this supposition to my friend, who laughed heartily at my youthful enthusiasm, but declared that it was never so ill-bestowed, for that it had been subject of astonishment that the Prince was never known to give way, after the fashion of age, to any of those loud and bitter railings against the injustice and ingratitude of mankind, which sometimes render the society of elderly persons liable to the complaint of querulousness and discontent, and yet none had ever perhaps better cause of complaint than he has had.

"The destiny of that man," said C., musingly, and scarcely conscious that he was speaking aloud, "has been a most singular and mysterious one. Each great event of his life might serve as a type of the people among whom it took place, and illustrative of the times in which it *could* have happened. The history of his childhood alone would serve to paint the epoch. It was one of the latest

examples of a style of morals and manners which the great revolution wholly swept away. He was born in Paris, in the year 1754. As was usual with families of distinction at that period, a nurse had been provided, who lodged in the hotel for some time previously to the birth of the expected babe, so that, immediately on the arrival of the offensive object, she might be at hand to carry it away. This arrangement was most agreeable and convenient. In a little space the mother re-appeared, brilliant and gay as ever, amid the circles she had deserted but for a moment. She had to endure at first, on the part of her '*essaim d'adorateurs*,' some few tender reproaches upon her cruelty in having deprived her friends of the charm of her society 'for so many centuries,' some few *grivois* remarks upon the *accident* which had caused this absence, and then the event was forgotten by all, even by the lady herself, who resumed, with increased ardour, her gambling and flirtations, while the poor wretched infant, abandoned by its natural protectors, and condemned to the care of mercenaries, was left either to vegetate in ignorance and filth, or to die without even having known a single moment of its mother's love.

"Such was the fate of Charles Maurice, the eldest son of the Comte de Talleyrand. Hurried from the paternal home in the very hour of his birth, he was taken into a distant part of the country by a nurse whose trade it was to tend and bring up children *tant bien que mal*, as he himself has often said. Here he remained until he had arrived at the age of seven years. The nurse was regularly paid — her reports of the child were always good—he was her '*cher coco*'—'the darling of her heart,' 'the pride of the whole country.' He was well in health—he had fresh air and exercise—he wanted neither food nor clothing—what then could the boy require more than all these? His mother must have answered this question, if ever she put it to herself, most satisfactorily; for it is certain she continued the business of her life—the *petit jeu*, the *grand jeu*, the *petit lever*, the *grand lever*—with as much energy and ardour as if no child had ever been. About this time, however, another '*facheux accident*' occurred—the birth of another son. Again was the lady obliged to retire for a while; again were her sentimental swains in deep distress. The second son appeared, and, like the first, was full of health and vigour;

like the eldest, cast in the mould of a manly race, with neither spot nor blemish. Such had been the will of God—but how was his goodly work perverted!

"The poor little new-comer was, like Charles Maurice, despatched to the same village where *he* still dwelt — revelling in village ignorance and liberty, with no care and no constraint, knowing no master, for he was the young seigneur; fearing no God, for he himself was the idol of the whole canton. None of his own family had been to see him during the whole of those weary years, and the little brother, whose arrival he now welcomed with such glee, in consideration of sundry boxes of delicious bon-bons, with which the nurse, according to old French custom, returned laden, was the only individual, not only of his race, but also of his own rank and station, whom he had ever seen! The father was frequently absent with the army for whole years together, in the pursuit of fame; the mother was entirely absorbed in the duties of the court, and stirred not further from Paris than Versailles. *She* was steady in pursuit of fortune. Did either of them succeed? The one died young, obscure in the annals of his house; the other died

old and dependent; while the poor neglected child lived to make all Europe ring with his renown; and to found, by his own exertions, one of the most splendid fortunes of the Continent! Thus will Fortune mock at the weak endeavours of poor vain mortals, to work out their own destiny!

"Such was the tender care and nursing that befel Charles Maurice, the eldest son of the Comte de Talleyrand Perigord, and the circumstances of his childhood, so far from being remarkable or uncommon, may be taken as an example of the manner in which the nobles of that day fulfilled the first and most solemn duty of the whole existence of man—that of tending and fostering with care the offspring which God has been pleased to bestow. However, all evil, as well as good, must cease in time, and Providence has granted for our consolation that, as the one must have an end, so shall the other not endure for ever; and thus, about three years after the arrival in the village of the little Archambault, his brother Charles Maurice did at length behold the countenance of one of his own kith and kin. The youngest brother of his father, the Bailli de Talleyrand, capitaine des galères, and knight of Malta, had just returned

from a cruise. He had been absent from his family for many years, and came with a heart overflowing with love towards his whole kindred; among whom stood first his brother and his young children.

"He was much grieved at the absence of the children, and immediately declared his intention of proceeding to the village where they had been placed, in order to embrace them before he set sail again, perhaps never to return. It was the depth of winter—the snow lay heavy on the ground—the roads were dangerous, but, '*corbleu! morbleu! ventrebleu!*' what cared he for danger? and what danger should prevent him from visiting the *petits drôles*, and even from carrying the eldest off to serve with him on board the Saint Joseph, if he found him, as he doubted not he should, full of fire and courage, and willing to assist in rebuilding the fortunes of his family by serving on the seas? He arrived at the village near nightfall, and alone, for the roads were so bad that he had been obliged to take horse; and, but one having been found in a serviceable condition, his servant had been obliged to stay at the town some miles distant.

"The entrance of the brave bailli into that soli-

tary village must have caused quite a sensation; and I have heard that the whole scene has remained graven on the powerful memory of the prince, as though it had occurred but yesterday. He will sometimes recount it to his intimates, and laugh at the singularity of the circumstances; but that laugh, believe me, must be one of bitterness and scorn. No wonder that this man should have felt such strange contempt for his fellow man—no wonder that he should at times have acted as though he fancied that he alone existed in the world.

"Well, just at a turn of the road which led down into the village, the bailli bethought himself that he knew not the way to the house of the Mère Rigaut, the nurse to whom he had been directed; and he checked his steed, to gaze around and see if any one was in view who could assist him. While he thus paused, there came hobbling up the hill a pale, delicate-looking boy, with long ringlets of very fair hair, hanging loose over his shoulders, and an indescribable look of gentility, which the bailli perceived at once—at least he always said so afterwards. He carried a bird-trap in his hand, for he was just going out to seek

for larks among the snow. The bailli called to him to come on faster; but, alas! as he drew near, he perceived that he was very lame, and that he bore a little crutch, which, however, he did not always use, but sometimes walking several steps without its aid, would flourish it before him as if in defiance, until a roughness in the road, or a loose stone, compelled him to place it again beneath his arm.

"'Hallo, *mon garçon!*' shouted the bailli, 'will you tell me the way to the house of the Mère Rigaut?'

"'That I will,' cried the boy, eyeing the bailli askance and smiling slyly; 'and, moreover, I will conduct you thither, if you will give me——'

"'Áy, ay,' said the bailli, 'never fear; but make haste child—the wind blows cold and sharp, and you shall have no cause to complain of my want of generosity.'

"'Nay, nay,' replied the boy, colouring, 'I meant to have asked you but for a ride on your steed to Mother Rigaut's door.'

"And as the child spoke, he looked with envy at the rough post-horse, which, all unkempt and shaggy as he was, appeared far superior to the

rude animals employed in plough or cart — the only ones ever seen in that distant village.

"'Is that all?' said the good-natured bailli, 'then come along—mount—quick, my lad—there—jump up in the twinkling of an eye.'

"The boy, lame as he was, sprang into the saddle, but the portly person of the bailli prevented him from taking a safe seat, so he leaned his little crutch upon the toe of the bailli's boot, and grappled the horse's mane with a firm grasp, almost standing upright; while the bailli, heedless of his perilous situation, trotted over the rough stones of the village pavement, the bells at the horse's bridle jingling merrily, and the loud laugh—half fear, half delight—of the bold urchin echoing far and near. Of course the whole village was roused in an instant, and the astonishment was great at beholding Mother Rigaut's 'Charlot' trotting down the street upon a strange gentleman's steed, his long fair hair blown about by the wind, and his face shining and glowing amid the golden masses of silken curls which fell over it.

"The bailli stopped at Mother Rigaut's door, but so little was he prepared to meet the truth, that he bade the boy, with whom he seemed mightily

pleased, hold the horse while he entered the house to speak to the good woman, who was already standing on the threshold, all smiles and courtesies, to welcome the strange gentleman. The bailli entered and closed the door after him. What passed within none can tell. It must have been an extraordinary scene, for the sound of voices in high dispute was heard for some minutes—a sound of sobbing and of wailing, and of loud expostulation; and presently the bailli was seen bursting from the cottage, and rushing upon the boy, and hugging and embracing him with transports of affection; then, all pale and trembling with emotion, he waved back with his riding-whip the advances of Mère Rigaut, who was pressing forward to clasp the child in her arms, and, seizing him in a sturdy grasp, he threw him on the saddle, and sprang up after him. But this time he allowed him room enough to ride at ease, and bade him sit in comfort, and then he placed his brawny arm round the boy's middle with solicitude, to keep him firm upon the saddle, and, putting spurs to the capering post-horse, he dashed out of the village without even asking news of any other child, or suffering the boy to take a last farewell of the Mère Rigaut, who followed him

with shrieks and lamentations until he was lost to sight.

"It was not till they had arrived at the little town, distant about two leagues from the village wherein Charles Maurice de Talleyrand—Mother Rigaut's 'Charlot'—had passed these first twelve years of his eventful life, and which he was destined to behold no more—that he was informed that the strange gentleman who had carried him off so abruptly, and in such a storm of indignation that he had not even stayed to see the little Archambaut, was his own uncle, the Bailli de Talleyrand, his father's brave and loving brother, whose generous heart had glowed with such indignation at sight of the unheeded state in which the poor child had been left, crippled for life through the awkwardness of the ignorant nurse, that, without hesitation, without permission, he had torn him from his misery, and, although greatly disappointed in the hope he had conceived of being able to take him on board the ship he commanded, in consequence of his infirmity, yet he would not suffer him to remain a moment longer abandoned to the ignorant kindness of which he had so long been a victim.

"As he was compelled to delay his return to

Paris for some little time, he immediately wrote to the count, to inform him of the circumstances in which he had found his nephew, Charles Maurice, and his intention of bringing him at once to Paris. The letter reached its destination some days before the worthy bailli, accompanied by his young charge, drove into the courtyard of the hotel where the Comte de Talleyrand resided. Here, to his great mortification, he found that the count was absent with the *armée de Flandre;* the countess was also absent on duty at the palace, it being her *semaine de service*, and not for worlds would she neglect her duty. She had, however, with an affectionate *prévoyance*, worthy of the greatest praise, appointed a gentleman to receive the boy from the hands of the bailli—a professor, who was to be his tutor at the College Louis le Grand, whither he was immediately to conduct his pupil, arrangements having already been made for his reception. The bailli sighed as he consigned the lad to the care of another stranger, and, taking an affectionate farewell, which was his last, immediately set off for Toulon, where he embarked, and was drowned at sea some few months afterwards.

"Had the worthy bailli lived, the destiny of Charles Maurice would have been far different, and

the fate of Europe have been changed. He would have found protection and support in his own family—in one of its members at least—and they would not have dared to wreak upon his head that deadly wrong, which changed the whole current of his existence, and compelled him to struggle and to toil for that which was by right his own. However, bad as matters were, they certainly might have been worse; for the gentleman to whose care Charles Maurice was confided, was at all events a kind and liberal person, and soon became greatly attached to his pupil. I have frequently seen him at the Hotel Talleyrand, even so lately as the year 1828. He was but a very few years older than the prince, and it was like a dream of other days to hear the ancient pupil and his more ancient tutor discourse for hours together of those early times, so long gone by, and of their friends and companions, all, with very few exceptions, long since in the grave. I have often thought that it must have been to the society and counsels of this most excellent man that the prince chiefly owed the softness and humanity of his character, which even his enemies, amid all their absurd accusations, have never been able to deny.

"I have heard the prince, even very lately,

speak of *ce cher* Père Langlois, as one of the most benevolent and pure-minded of men, and his friendship and affection for him knew no change, through all the vicissitudes of fortune, or the changes in politics. The prince, I believe, allowed him a very handsome income up to the day of his death; but this circumstance did not prevent him from sometimes indulging his quondam pupil with a few gentle remonstrances and *réprésentations*, whenever, by any misplaced word, or ill-timed reflection, he wounded the old professor's prejudices; and it was a most curious sight to witness the deference with which his observations would be received by the prince, who, so strong was the power of old association, bowed his mighty intellect, and submitted to the reprimands of the obscure and dependent professor. I have often been present at his visits, and always took most especial delight in witnessing the kindly feeling, the true affection, which existed between the pair. M. Langlois still wore, in 1828, the costume he had worn before the revolution, when, as professor of rhetoric at the college of Louis le Grand, he had undertaken the care and education of the poor neglected boy from the distant village in Perigord

—a long-skirted black coat, without a collar, and buttoned up to the chin, black knee breeches and silk stockings, with large shoes and bright plated knee-buckles. His coiffure was in *ailes de pigeon*, with a long and goodly queue, well powdered; the large, flat snuff-box which he drew from the vasty deep of his ample pocket, and the brown checquered handkerchief which he used with a flourish and a loud report, brought back to memory at once the whole herd of *savans crasseux* of the eighteenth century.

"Well, to return to my tale. At the college, Charles Maurice devoted himself most manfully to study. This is proved by the fact of his having obtained, the second year of his admission, the first prize of his class, although competition must have been hard with boys who had been in the college for many years, while he had been running wild and barefoot on the plains of Perigord. Three years passed away cheerily enough at the college. His life of study had, however, but little variety, for he was during that time one of the unfavoured few who were compelled by the arrangements of their parents to remain at the college during the short vacation. His mother came but seldom to

visit him, and never came alone. She was mostly accompanied by an eminent surgeon of Paris, who examined the boy's leg, and bandaged it and pulled it out to force it to match in length with the other, and burnt and cauterized the offending nerve until the poor fellow learned to dread with extreme terror the summons to the *parloir*, and the announcement that *madame sa mère* was awaiting him there. I have often heard him tell of the agony of these visits, and of the disappointment which he experienced on seeing all his playmates depart to their various homes for the holidays, but I never heard him utter a single complaint or condemnation of his mother's conduct.

"It was at this time that his father died from the consequences of an old wound received in a skirmish some years before, and Charles Maurice was now the Comte de Talleyrand, and head of that branch of the family to which he belonged. Meanwhile, the younger son, Archambaut, had likewise returned from his most refined and tender nursing; but *he* had had the better chance; *his* limbs were sound and well developed, as God had made them. No dire accident, the consequence of foul neglect, had marred his shape or tarnished his comeliness.

So, one fine day, and as a natural consequence, mark you, of this fortunate circumstance, when Charles Maurice, the *eldest* son, had finished his course of study at Louis le Grand, having passed through his classes with great *éclat*, there came a tall, sallow, black-robed priest, and took him away from the midst of friends to the grim old *seminaire* of St. Sulpice, and it was there that he received the astounding intimation, from the lips of the superior himself, that, by the decision of a *conseil de famille*, from which there was no appeal, his birthright had been taken from him, and transferred to his younger brother.

"'Why so?' faltered the boy, unable to conceal his emotion.

"'He is not a cripple,' was the stern and cruel answer.

"It must have been that hour—nay, that very instant—the echo of those heartless words—which made the Prince de Talleyrand what he is even to this very day. Who shall tell the bitter throes of that bold, strong-hearted youth, as he heard the unjust sentence? Was it defiance and despair, the gift of hell, or resignation, the blessed boon of Heaven, which caused him to suffer the coarse,

black robe to be thrown at once above his college uniform, without a cry, without a murmur? None will ever be able to divine what his feelings were, for this one incident is always passed over by the prince. He never refers to it, even when in familiar conversation with his most loved intimates. It is certain, therefore, that the single hour of which I speak, bore with it a whole life of bitterness and agony.

"It is evident, as usual with him throughout his whole life, that his decision, however, was taken on the instant. He murmured not—he sued not for commutation of the hateful sentence. He knew that it would be in vain. He even sought at once to conform, outwardly at least, to all the tedium of the endless rules and regulations by which the house was governed; but his whole character was changed—his very nature was warped and blasted. Whatever historians may write, and credulous readers choose to believe, he was *not* a 'silent, solitary boy, loving to muse while his comrades played around him,' as I have seen it written in a recent account of his life. Just the contrary. While at Louis le Grand, he was remarkable for his skill and dexterity at all kinds of games requiring either

fleetness of foot or strength of limb; which fact was so extraordinary, from his infirmity, that the tradition has been preserved in the college. He was strong and hardy, in spite of his lameness. This he owed to the fresh air and free exercise he had enjoyed in his early childhood. His temper was mild and tractable, and, when attacked, his only weapon of defence was his tongue. His sharp, quick speech became, indeed, the terror of his comrades. Even then he had learned that the art of governing others consisted merely in self-command. What a pity that some of his juvenile *bon mots* have not been preserved; they must have been delightful; the very sap and freshness of his mental vigour.

"At Louis le Grand he had been surrounded by the bold, ambitious spirits of the rising generation of that day, boys of all classes of society, all animated with the same eager desire for distinction, and, each in his degree, with the same thirst for glory. Even these children were awaking to the conviction that a new light was about to break upon the world, that the triumph of mind over matter was nigh at hand, and that the power of brute force must yield at length to the mightier power of intellect. A discontented spirit had gone forth, and even

walked abroad into the very nurseries throughout the land. The days were past when the boys of noble blood sat down to table first and were served by the urchin *roturiers*, their fellow-students. At board, in class, or at play, the sons of the noble and the lowly, of the wealthy and the poor, were now jostled together. The high-born dunce, who was at collége merely to while away the useless years between the epoch of actual childhood and that of his admission (still a child) into the army, no longer took precedence of the plebeian boy who was toiling and striving to acquire knowledge, even though it might have been the credit of the former which obtained the admission of the latter into the college.

"In this struggle, the talents and quickness of young Talleyrand had shone conspicuously. His position on his first entrance into the college had been most undefined and false. He had arrived from Perigord wild and untutored, ignorant of the simplest social tradition of the *noblesse;* therefore had he no place or influence among the nobles; while, without wealth, or any of the dazzling appurtenances of his rank at command, he could scarcely be expected to have sway with the *roturiers;* and

yet, before the first half year had passed away, he was found to be the prime mover and counsel of both factions by the power of his intellect alone. These are facts which still live in the memory of some few of the prince's old associates, and show how early that grasping mind, which was destined to govern those who governed the world itself, began to assert its dominion and to exercise its powers.

"I have dwelt thus lengthily upon the childhood of the Prince de Talleyrand, because, in the events by which it was marked, you may find both cause and excuse for many things that took place in after years. Such had been his life at Louis le Grand. Now, at the Seminaire, he was thrown at once among a set of creatures of a far different stamp from the bold and independent beings he had left. His new companions were mostly, like himself, sons of the poor *noblesse;* but, unlike himself, they were either the *younger* or the *bastard* sons. Not one of these had been deprived, as he had been, of his name and birthright, therefore none could have sympathy with all the bitterness that must have lain so heavy on his heart. Instead of the variety which gave such interest to his college

life, and such constant food to his perceptive powers, he was surrounded in his new abode by beings all actuated by one single motive, and who had therefore been moulded by the same views into the same character. The sleepy dream of life at St. Sulpice centred wholly in ecclesiastical distinction and honour, and merely resolved itself into either riches or dignities, according to the temper of the dreamer. The ready wit, the lively perceptions of young Talleyrand, could not be appreciated in a community where hope was deadened, and imagination dulled, by the certainty that robbed the Future of the dim veil with which it is hidden from the great mass of mankind, and which, according to the morals of the period, rendered the after years of the younger son of the poor noble, or the bastard child of the rich one, as easily to be defined, and as easy to unravel as a record of the past. So must have thought that little congregation of the Seminaire of Saint Sulpice, who were gathered there in 1770, the year of the admission of Charles Maurice. But God had ordained it otherwise; and, could some few of the fortunes of those lads be told at this day, we should perhaps find as great diversity of adventure, and many a

tale of interest as wild and fearful, as those which could be furnished by the youthful denizens of the Royal College of Louis le Grand at the same period.

"However, it does not appear that the young candidate for church preferment was guilty, for a single moment, of deception, with regard to those who had thus fashioned out his destiny. He wore no mask of hypocrisy at that time certainly, made no false pretence of fasting or of penance; but openly and freely shared in all the amusements which were within his reach, perhaps buoyed up with the presentiment that the time was drawing nigh when the cowled monk and the stoled priest would be bound by no obligation to keep the vow which had been breathed from terror or necessity.

"It is pleasant to listen to his quiet and even mirthful tales of the life he led when staying at the *succursale* of the establishment, which was situated at Vaugirard, near which place (at Issy) the Duchess of Orleans, mother of our present King Louis Philippe, possessed a most splendid château. Here she used to assemble all the *élite* of the society of Paris, and on the boards of the little theatre belonging to the château were first produced some

of the dramatic pieces which afterwards had the greatest vogue in the capital. To be present at these representations was an honour, of course, far beyond the pretensions of the poor seminaristes, whose ears were tantalized during the long summer nights by the rattling of carriage-wheels, and the hallooing of livered attendants, as all the rank and beauty of Paris flew by the old gray convent, where the priestly inhabitants should have been slumbering in holy calm. But young Talleyrand slumbered not. He would remain gazing for hours through the narrow apertures of the jalousies,—which the watchful eye of the *surveillant* caused always to be closed,—and, with straining eyes and yearning heart, seek to picture to his fancy the faces and the forms of the fair occupants of the carriages which passed in rapid succession, until the desire to join the happy groups he beheld thus fleeting before him became irresistible, and he resolved *coûte que coûte* to gratify it. No sooner was the resolution formed than he hastened to its execution.

"Accordingly, one bright balmy night in August, he flung his black serge frock *aux orties*, and, without assistance and without a confidant (he

never asked or took advice), he climbed the old crumbling wall of the garden, and jumped up behind one of the gay carriages which had so excited his envy. He will sometimes smile even now at the self-confidence with which he planted himself, all terrified and blushing, however, at the heels of the party who alighted at the *perron* of the château. He was fairly astonished at his own impudence, when he found himself comfortably seated in the parterre of the theatre, with an officer of the Gardes Françaises on one side, and a little masked and mincing *abbé petit-maître* on the other; nor could he believe, as he raised his eyes and gazed around on that bright and brilliant company, that he was not in reality where he ought at that moment to have been, stretched on his lowly pallet, and dreaming of paradise.

"When the curtain rose, and the play began, his admiration and delight became almost painful. The piece was Racine's 'Phèdre,' and the famous Mademoiselle Contat, who performed the part of the wretched wife and mother, was in more senses than one the heroine of the evening. She had just been released from the prison of Fort l'Evêque, where she had been confined for some time, in

consequence of having refused to apologize to the Paris parterre, for treating its opinion and authority with contempt. Enthusiasm was at its height on her account. Party spirit had run so high, that duels had been fought between old friends, and *liaisons* of long standing been broken off, in consequence of differences of opinion with regard to her conduct in this matter. Madame de L——, a great patroness of the drama, had not hesitated at making herself the public talk, by taking to prison, in her open carriage in broad day, and in the face of all Paris, seated on her lap, with dishevelled hair and streaming eyes, the fair and injured Emilie! The new perfume, *larmes de Contat*, had become indispensable. Better go without a pocket-handkerchief at all than produce one which was not redolent of the complicated fragrance. There had been but a single incident to divert from tears and sobs in this adventure. The police-officer, who had been charged with the arrest of Mademoiselle Contat, had found her in the tragic mood, lofty and sullen. 'Take all!' she had exclaimed, with theatrical grandeur; 'you are welcome to take all—my liberty—my very life itself—but you cannot take my honour!' 'Fear not,

mademoiselle,' replied the man; '*où il n'y a rien, le roi perd ses droits.*'

"Some had laughed at the witticism—others had felt it most deeply, as the unkindest cut of all. In short, her punishment and its cause had created a species of frenzy in the public mind, which had occasioned all minor troubles, whether of politics or finance, to be forgotten for a while. You may judge, then, of the effect produced by the appearance of Mdlle. Contat on the stage of this little *théâtre de bonne compagnie*, before an audience of whom she was the idol, and who had taken her imprisonment as the deepest personal offence to themselves. Every individual in the house rose and greeted her with transport. There was loud clapping of hands, and stamping of feet; and some wept salt tears, and embraced their neighbours lovingly, so great was the common joy, so universal the gratification afforded by the release of the great Contat! Charles Maurice alone remained impassible amid all the clamour, for he knew not what it meant, until the Garde Française gave him a cuff, and bade him shout, or he would pink him, and the perfumed abbé fell upon his neck, and with sobs begged him, for Heaven's

sake, to clap his hands, that he might be quite sure he was not seated next to a corpse, for nothing else could thus long have borne the presence of a beauty so divine without some demonstration of delight.

"It was when the clamour had ceased, and the play was allowed to proceed, that the real delight of young Talleyrand commenced. I have often heard him say, that never, during the lengthened years of his brilliant life, does he remember to have experienced an admiration so glowing, so intense, as on that memorable evening. During the whole of the performance, he had remained in a perfect trance, and, when it was concluded, he almost wept at the thought that he might possibly behold it no more. The play was followed by a supper, again followed by dancing, which doubtless lasted till the dawn, but our seminariste deemed it prudent to hasten homeward before matins, for fear of detection. This he accomplished on foot, and with celerity, and he was just comfortably settled in his bed when the odious clang of the chapel bell roused him ere he had yet fallen asleep. And it was long, indeed, before he again slept calmly as he had done before. That

night's entrancement had opened to his sight visions of forbidden things, of which till then he had never dreamed, and the possibility of returning again with composure to the dull life of the seminaire was gone for ever! His passion for Mademoiselle Contat grew to be the one sole thought which occupied his mind, and he soon found means to indulge it. Night after night would he escape from his prison, and walk to Paris (after her return to the Théâtre Royal), in order to witness the least fragment of her acting. Sometimes, on the vigils of great festivals, when prayers had continued late at the chapel, or the superior had indulged his flock with an over-long story at the supper-table, the poor youth could not set out on his perilous journey until it was too late; and many a time has he had the mortification of arriving at the theatre, after an expensive ride or a fatiguing walk from Vaugirard, just as the curtain was about to fall, and shut out the goddess from his sight. He often recalls those few short months of peril and excitement, as among the happiest of his life.

"It was just about this time that he met with a romantic adventure, which he cannot even now relate without emotion, and which has all the

character of the events which compose the most pure and healthy of the novels of the period. He was one day returning from the *Bibliothèque* of the Sorbonne to the Seminaire Saint Sulpice, laden with books and papers, when a violent storm of rain coming on, he was forced to seek shelter beneath a gateway in the Rue du Pot de Fer. The neighbourhood at that time was full of convents and ecclesiastical establishments—the Benedictines —the Carmelites—the Frères Minimes—the Cordeliers—all had houses or *succursales*, about the Place Saint Sulpice; so that you might have walked down whole streets of dark gloomy wall, without finding a single refuge from the rain—the convent doors being kept inhospitably closed, and the small space beneath the eaves being even more drenched than the middle of the street, from the dripping gutters which poured down upon the miserable wayfarer one continued sheet of water, certainly not so pure as that which fell straight from heaven. There was but a single space in the whole street where the passenger could hope for a dry footing, and young Talleyrand knew it well; a little archway, leading to the back-door of a convent of Benedictines—the name of which I forget—whose principal entrance was in the Rue de Vaugirard.

"It was a long, narrow passage, so dark that it was impossible to perceive any one concealed there, and might have served admirably as a place of ambush for any lurking thief or assassin, who might have chosen to harbour in its gloomy recess. Here the youth had stood some time watching the rain—which continued to fall in torrents—still laden with his books; yet not daring to open one of them, fearful that the rest might fall into the mud—of course devoured with *ennui*, and stamping with impatience,—just, in fact, on the point of launching forth once more—if it were merely for the sake of changing his station for another more amusing,—when suddenly he became conscious of the presence of another person in the passage. He says that he was rather startled at first, but it did not belong either to his age or character to pass without investigation any circumstance which had arrested his attention: so clearing his throat with a successful effort, he called out manfully, '*Qui vive?*'

"The exclamation was answered by a faint and stifled cry, issuing from the very furthermost corner of the obscure passage. The young man ventured forward without hesitation, and discovered a dark and shapeless form huddled up in one corner of

the threshold of the convent-door, whose outline, so dark was the place, was invisible, even at arm's length. He was conscious that the form was that of a female, and he stretched out his hand, and said kindly,—'What fear you?—are you in trouble? —why are you hidden thus? Let me assist you, if you are in pain.'

"As he spoke these words, the figure slowly rose—a slight, frail, delicate form, that of a girl scarcely beyond the age of childhood, attired in the loose black dress of serge and large capuchon of the convent beneath the gateway of which they were standing. He took her gently by the hand and led her forward to the light. The poor girl was so terrified, that she offered no resistance, and, conducting her to the entrance of the passage, he gently withdrew the capuchon, with which she had covered her face, bidding her take comfort, for that he would do her no harm. The girl looked up into his countenance with an expression of anxiety and doubt, but the gentle kindness which she saw written there must have relieved her instantly, for she exclaimed, in a whisper, 'Oh no—I *know* you will not betray me—but how *can* you assist me? I am lost for ever!' and then she buried her face in her hands, and sobbed aloud.

"The youth remained gazing upon the girl, in mingled admiration and surprise. Never, to this very hour, he has often said, has he beheld a face of greater beauty than that which stood thus revealed to him in the dim light. It was a small and exquisitely delicate cast of countenance, with large wild eyes and arched eyebrows, and a calm, snow-white forehead, which a painter might have given to the Madonna standing at Saint Anne's knee. Her hair was hanging loose about her face, in dripping masses, from the rain through which she had passed, and the steam of the capuchon. Her small chiselled mouth was parted, and disclosed two rows of pearly teeth. But Talleyrand was most struck by the singular beauty of her complexion, which, although she evidently had been terrified, was not pale, but of the most vivid bloom, like the petals of the damask rose; while her eyes almost dazzled him, so bright and flashing was their lustre. By his patience and his kindly manner, he soon succeeded in winning the little maiden's confidence; and, although still in great agitation, she told him the story of her troubles, which was a singular one, and most affecting.

"She said that she was a novice of the convent

of the Benedictine ladies, of the Rue de Vaugirard, and that the passage where they were standing formed part of the premises belonging to the building. She had been in that house ever since the age of four years—she was now fifteen—and during all that time she had never once been allowed to go beyond those walls. She had often yearned most intensely, she said, to see the world, which the other novices and the *pensionnaires* had described to her as being so very beautiful. She had sometimes begged very earnestly, too, to be permitted to accompany one of the lay sisters, who went sometimes into the country, to see a sick nun of the order, who was staying there for the recovery of her health; but she had been told that out of kindness she must be refused; for, as it was her destiny to pass her whole life in that old convent, it would be much better that she should behold no other place, and those who had more experience than herself could tell what regret and misery she would avoid by her ignorance of other scenes. She was to have renewed her vows of novitiate on the Thursday before, but she had been so ill, that the ceremony had been deferred until the week following, and then she should enter

into the last year of novitiate, and when that had passed away, she should take the black veil and be cloistered for the rest of her life. Her name, she added, was Constance de V., but she knew not of any friends or kindred which she had. A notary had always remitted to the abbess the sums necessary for the expenses of her board and education, and the dower money also was already lodged in the lady's hands, so that there was no hope—none—none—that she should ever realize her dream of beholding ever so small a portion of the world, of whose beauty she had heard so much. She said this with such a deep sigh, and such a yearning look towards the gloomy street where the rain still plashed in torrents, that the listener was moved almost to tears.

"'But how came you here, mademoiselle?' said he, 'and in this state, too?' pointing to her dress, which was wet through, and clung to her form in damp and streaming folds.

"'Oh, I have not told you all,' replied she, hesitatingly. 'I know that I have done wrong, but my punishment is great as my offence:' and she looked down the dark passage towards the door with a shudder of affright. 'But thus it was.

I had been ill in bed for more than a week, and had grown so weary of my little cell—and last night I could not sleep for thinking of all the brightness of the world I never was to see. I prayed to the Holy Virgin to take away these wicked thoughts from my mind, but she did not think fit to give me grace, for towards morning my desire to go abroad became even more intense; and so, when sister Marthe, who watches me, left me, still thinking that I was asleep, to go to matins, I rose from my bed and came down, to walk for a few moments beneath the cloisters of the outer court, in the hope that the air of the place, confined as it was, might help to cool the fever of the past night. I have long been forbidden to go into the garden; they say it is too cold and damp, and that my cough will be worse than ever if I stay beneath the trees. Well, I turned round and round the court, listening to the chimes of Saint Sulpice, and thinking of what our Lady Abbess tells me I should never think of—the delight of lying in some cool green meadow, on the grass, beneath the overhanging branches of some old tree—when the tempter, who, as Sister Marthe has often told me, already half possesses my lost soul

(alas! she *must* speak truth), led me this way—into the cloister which leads to yonder door. It was ajar—Mother Jeanne, the *femme de peine*, had just been cleaning it with broom and pail, and had opened it to sweep the rubbish into this dark passage. How she could have left it open thus I cannot tell—yes, Sister Marthe is right—it *must* have been the tempter's work! My heart beat violently at sight of that open door. I thought to have fled, but I yielded to temptation, and peeped through the long dark passage into the street beyond. Scarcely had I thus gazed for an instant, when I was seized with a desire so burning, so intense, to see the *Place*, which I had been told was at the end of this little street, that, without a moment's reflection, I rushed down the passage and was free. I meant to have merely cast one look upon the *Place*, and have returned immediately. I thought it might be possible that in this illness I might die, and it was very hard that I should leave a world, which they tell me God has made so full of beauty, without having beheld aught besides this dull old pile; so I stepped out into the street with more delight than I ought to have done, considering that I was doing what was wrong. I

buried my head in my capuchon, and turned boldly down the street to the left; but I had not gone far before I perceived that I must have taken the wrong direction, for as I drew near to the end, I saw not the fine open square which I had been promised, but another street more dirty and more dull than the one I had just traversed. During the walk, I did not meet a soul, or I think I should have fainted, for it was not till I thus stood for the first time alone and unaided that I remembered that my dress must at once betray me. I was resolved to return immediately, but, in the mean time, this storm of rain came suddenly beating down with such intense fury that my dress was wet through in an instant. I ran with all the swiftness of which I was capable, to regain this dark passage; but judge of the agony of affright that I experienced on beholding the door which I had closed, and of which I had taken the key, fastened on the inside! Mother Jeanne must have perceived the absence of the key, and have bolted it within. Oh, I am lost! She has doubtless already been to tell our lady mother. They will all know 'tis I who am the guilty one, for everybody else will be at matins!'

"As the poor girl concluded her story, she again burst into a paroxysm of grief. The young seminariste endeavoured to soothe her, and offered to go round to the great gate to try and obtain admittance there, but the trembling girl clung to him with such energy, that he could not tear himself away.

"'No, no; do not leave me now,' exclaimed she. 'I dare not be left thus alone. What shall I say when they come and find me here? They will come, I know, directly, and bear me back with hootings and with shame.'

"As she spoke, so great was her terror, that she shook like the aspen leaf, and her companion was obliged to support her by placing his arm gently round her waist, or she would have fallen. He then perceived, with great distress, that this violent trembling was the spasmodic shuddering of fever; and, as she placed her hand upon her bosom to still the convulsive throe, he beheld with yet greater horror that she wore nothing beneath her robe but the night dress which she had on when she left her bed. His heart was wrung at the thought of that delicate creature abroad thus, burnt with fever, and wet to the skin. It must be death to so fragile

a being. Something, however, must be done. He durst not leave her. She was in that state of mind that she might have fallen senseless to the earth if she had been left alone; neither could he drag her with him the whole length of the street through the pouring rain, in order to arrive at the great gate of the convent. The scandal would have been terrific, had they been seen together in the costume which they each wore. In the midst of this painful embarrassment, like the drowning man who clings to a straw, he went up to the door and turned the key. There was no impediment in the lock. He shook the door violently, then pushed it with all his might. Oh, God of mercy, it yields! It is *not* bolted, for daylight may be seen through the opening. Once more he brings all his strength to bear against the iron-studded door. The drops of sweat stand like beads upon his forehead, with the anxiety of the moment and the violence of his exertions. But he is presently rewarded by the grating noise caused by the removal of the obstacle within, and the faint shriek of joy which escaped the lips of the sweet Constance. She sees it all now! Mother Jeanne, in her rage for cleaning, had moved the old oaken bench from the archway

of the cloister, and had placed it crosswise before the door, where it had resisted all her own puny efforts, as though it had been a wall of iron; and now her laugh of delight is so convulsive that it is more painful than were her tears and sobs. Meanwhile, young Talleyrand had pushed open a space sufficient for her passage into the cloister, and he assisted her to mount the bench and pass through. The hand which she gave him, and which but a little while before had startled him by its burning touch, was now as cold as marble. He imprinted one pure and holy kiss upon it before he closed the door for ever; and when he found that she withdrew it not, but thanked him, and blessed him fervently, and called him her deliverer, and said '*that he had saved her life*,' he shut the door abruptly, for he could bear no more. He stood for a moment listening at the keyhole for the sound of her retreating step. It must have been very light, however, for he heard it not. He then walked slowly home to the *seminaire*, insensible now to either wind or rain.

"The books which the young student had brought from the Sorbonne were unperused that day. His mind was too much absorbed with the

memory of that beauteous maiden, and with the undefined terror which he experienced for her sake. On the morrow, he walked several times completely round the convent walls, but he saw not an evidence that the building was inhabited by a single human being. On the third day, he could not control his impatience, and bestowed a silver crown on the *commissionaire* to go and ask, as if despatched by some great lady, whose name he was to forget, for news of the health of Mademoiselle Constance de V. The answer he brought back was that 'Mademoiselle Constance de V., in an attack of fever, being for a few moments unwatched, had risen from her bed and gone down into the cloisters, no doubt feeling grievously ill, and in search of assistance. It was supposed that she had wandered for some time in the quadrangle, for she was found lying drenched with wet upon the oaken bench, by the *porte de service* of the outer court. She was without sense or motion when taken up, and it was certain that she had already been dead for some time (this was the private opinion of the *tourière*), although the superior would insist on having the viaticum administered all the same. She had been buried that very

morning at daybreak, and Mademoiselle de Breteuil, the favourite *pensionnaire* of the abbess, had got the promise of her cell to keep her birds in, until the arrival of another *pensionnaire* to occupy it. The abbess was very angry with sister Marthe for having left the bedside of Mademoiselle de V., but could not punish her, it having been proved that she had only gone to matins.

"Such had been the fate of that beauteous girl! The earth already covered her, before she had even seen the light. That stealthy walk along the dreary street, amid the cold and pelting rain, was all the experience she had carried to the grave, of the world she had longed so ardently to see; and, when the *seminariste* thought on the story of her life, and compared it with his own, he felt that he no longer had a right to complain. He had spent his childhood at least amid fresh air and free exercise wholesome to the body, and also amid the rude kindness and overwhelming affection wholesome to the mind; while the poor child whose dying grasp he almost fancied that he could still feel, had never been allowed to roam beyond the gloomy precincts of her prison-house. With her innocence and loveliness, she had been suffered to

grow like some rank weed which springs amid the crevice of the pavement stone of the foul jail-yard, and struggles but in vain to catch a gleam of sunshine or a breath of air, until, wearied with the effort, it sinks back dead into the crevice from which it sprung.

"This event made a great impression upon M. de Talleyrand, and sobered him for some time after its occurrence. He took to studying more diligently than hitherto, and shone among his competitors as brilliantly as he had already done at Louis le Grand. His speeches at the conferences which were held every month at Saint Sulpice, were judged to be masterpieces of reasoning and logic, and were thought worthy of being preserved among the records of the *seminaire*—an immense honour for so young a man. He was now seventeen: it was judged advisable that he should go to finish his theological studies '*en Sorbonne*,' and it was during the short interval which elapsed between leaving the *seminaire* and entering the *Sorbonne*, that he first lodged at home. Note this when ye talk of the 'good old times:'—the Prince de Talleyrand was seventeen years of age *before he had slept a single night beneath his father's roof!*

Well might Jean Jacques thunder forth his maledictions upon the fine ladies, the '*marâtres sans entrailles*' of his day!"

My friend here paused, to my great sorrow, with all the self-complacency of a professed lion exhibitor, to descant upon the beauty of the landscape as seen from the point at which we had arrived. Of course there were the well-known wonders familiar to all natural-beauty-hunters ever since the world began—the seeing into so many departments—the commanding a view of so many parishes, but which always worry me to death.

"What is that ruin?" said I, pointing to a pile of rubbish which lay close at hand.

"Ah, that is no ruin," replied C., laughing, "it is just the contrary, for it is an unfinished building. The history of that 'ruin' would amuse you, more than all the history of the person whose work it was. The prince calls it the '*Folie Princesse*,' and you shall have the story as we go home."

CHAPTER VI.

MIRABEAU—THE PRINCESS T.—THE MAYOR OF VALENCAY.

We alighted from the carriage, and sat down on one of the blocks of stone which lay scattered about in all directions, bearing witness to the gigantic intentions of the projector, and also to the signal failure of the enterprise. C. looked around with sadness.

"The sight of this place," said he, "recalls to mind so much both of pain and pleasure, so many associations for ever lost to Valençay, that I cannot behold it without a certain feeling of melancholy, which I little thought it would ever have inspired. And yet, in spite of all the jesting and merry sarcasm, the bon-mots and epigrams to which the first discovery of the little monument gave rise, it

might serve to illustrate my favourite argument, when answering those who attack, by sweeping generalities, the whole life of the prince, and which I frame thus: 'No man can be so very worthless who has made such friendships as he has done, and won attachments so lasting and so true.'

"It is, in fact, one of the most extraordinary qualifications of this great man, and forms a parallel to what is told of the fascinating influence of Napoleon. His powers of pleasing are so great, that he can with justice boast of never having failed to captivate, where he has been willing to do so, even when having to combat enmity and prejudice. Those who are accustomed to the bland and polished courtesy of his old age can readily imagine that in youth his influence must have been all-powerful. With this fascination of manner he must have also been possessed of the most aristocratic and handsome person, from the dignity of which, strange to say, the deformity of his foot never detracted. He was very fair, of most brilliant yet delicate complexion, with eyes of a soft dark blue, much covered by the lids, which contributed greatly to the air of quiet *recueillement*, misconstrued by many into an expression of cunning,

which was habitual to him. His hair has always been considered one of his greatest attractions, being of the bright golden hue, so uncommon even in the north; and when he wore it loose over his shoulders, neither discoloured by powder nor disfigured by the torturing iron of the perruquier, it must have been most beautiful. Even to this very hour, you cannot fail to remark its rich luxuriance. It is not yet wholly white, but merely grey, and its original golden colour still shines bright amid the silver.

"I have seen several portraits of the prince, taken in his youth. There is one, a miniature, which, set in a bracelet, has met my eye every day for some years past, upon the arm of the fair Duchess de D., which never fails to arrest my attention, and to inspire me with the same interest, the same dreams and illusions of the past, as though, upon each occasion I behold it, it was for the first time. The likeness may be strongly traced even now. The features are moulded with a delicacy peculiar to the race of the Perigords, and the countenance is one which might certainly have been suspected of having greatly aided his varied talents and endowments, in the success for

which he was so applauded and so envied. The costume in this picture is of about the year 1775, when Talleyrand was in the prime of youth, and when he had not long emerged from St. Sulpice; and yet the portrait is rather that of a young man of fashion of the time than of a youth vowed to a life of penance and austerity. The hair, of which he was always proud, hangs loose and unshorn over his embroidered coat; no sign of monkish scissors or of priestly tonsure is there. There does not exist a picture of the prince either as Abbé de Perigord or as Bishop of Autun. So completely did he ever separate himself from the state of life into which he had been thrust by the force of circumstances, that he never would consent to have a palpable record of his profession brought in after times as a memorial against him. There is a beautiful portrait of Talleyrand when Prince de Benevent and Vice Grand Elector, painted by Gerard, and one of the best performances of that artist, now at Rochecotte, wherein the physiognomist might have *beau jeu*, for the countenance in this picture bears the most lively and *spirituel* expression that could possibly be represented by art. The painting by Scheffer, which has been engraved

in London, and published by Colnaghi, is the best in existence as to the likeness, which is most striking. The artist has represented, in a manner almost sublime, the peculiar *mélange* of melancholy and *finesse* which the countenance of the prince always wears when in meditation,—an expression which sometimes inspires me with a feeling of the deepest sadness; it is the cheerfulness of the mind contending against physical infirmity and pain.

"You will readily believe that, with all the advantages both of mind and person which he possessed—with ambition of that quiet kind, which knows no obstacle in the attainment of its ends, and yet can wait with calm and bide its time—which is slow to decide, yet quick to move when the hour is arrived for action—with the courtly manners which must have been hereditary, joined to the calm dignity which he had acquired in the *Séminaire* de St. Sulpice, his first appearance in the world wherein he was destined to live and move, was hailed with peculiar triumph and satisfaction. The fame of his skill in argument, his subtlety in wrangling, had got beyond the walls of the *Séminaire*, long before he himself had left it for the independence of the Sorbonne. The *con-*

férences which took place weekly in the old hall of the *Séminaire* had brought out his powers of persuasion, and his great quickness of imagination, which displayed itself admirably in pointed epigram and brilliant repartee.

"There are people living even now who can remember the effect which some of his controversial arguments produced at the time, among the audiences who enjoyed the privilege of a seat upon the old oaken benches of the *Séminaire*, on the days reserved for these public discussions. They must have been *chefs-d'œuvres*, full of point and pith, and generally sent the listeners away laughing with him, and sympathising with his adversary. These discourses were always read in public from a manuscript *cahier*, and were preserved in the *archives* of the *Séminaire*, until the revolution dispersed the whole of the property of the establishment, and they were lost. It is a great pity they were not preserved, as they must have contained much of the vivacity and energy of his youth, which were sadly wanting in his subsequent speeches; for Talleyrand has never possessed the qualifications necessary to the success of an orator; his delivery was lengthened, and his voice

too deep and hollow to produce an effect upon a large assembly. Had it not been for these natural defects, all the vigour and fire of a Mirabeau would have been reckoned as nought, compared with the steady wit and cool philosophy of which Talleyrand was master.

"The world of fashion, ever on the look-out for novelty, stretched forth its arms to hug to its bosom the young abbé on his first appearance within its charmed ring. The reverend title with which he was invested, so far from being a preventive to his enjoyment of all the pleasures of the corrupt society of the period, rather served as an additional pretext for claiming his full share. The youthful Abbé de Perigord was courted and flattered by all parties; his sayings were repeated, his sentiments quoted upon all occasions. The world would now most willingly have spoiled him, and avenged the neglect of his relations, and the wrongs and insults which had been heaped upon his childhood. But it was too late: he had already learned to despise that world to whose mean prejudices he had been made a sacrifice, and his heart and soul were already devoted to the cause of those whose struggles were beginning to make the

old fabric of society quake and totter to its very foundations. It was while he was studying at the Sorbonne that the first shocks of the new era were beginning to be felt; but young Talleyrand, as yet, took no share in the struggle. His whole ambition for the moment was devoted to retrieving lost time in literature, and I have heard him say that the happiest days of his existence were spent alone, in the gloomy library of the Sorbonne, seated coiled up on the steps of the library ladder, while his cousin went abroad to pick up the news, and bring home reports of the progress of events. The practical knowledge of books which he acquired in this way was immense, and has served him all through life to season his conversation with quotation or parody.

"He was soon, however, torn from the enjoyment of this quiet mode of existence, by being named coadjutor to his uncle, the Archbishop of Rheims. From that time forward, books were laid aside, and he returned to them no more. The human heart became his only study, and one in which he soon became a perfect adept. The history of his life must prove, to every thinking mind, that at this very period his decision was thoroughly

taken as to the line of conduct he would pursue, and the party in politics it was his intention to adopt, for he never gave himself up to the seductions of that world which sought him with such eagerness. He entered into its enjoyments, and profited by its indulgence; but there is no record of any strong friendship having been formed with any of its members. He allied himself at once to the new party, and among its leaders were his attachments chosen. Sièyes and Mirabeau were the beacon stars of his youth. The latter, in particular, was known to entertain the highest opinion of Talleyrand, and has left ample proof, in his letters and papers, that he considered him the only man capable of succeeding him as leader of the party he had so triumphantly created.

"You will scarcely credit the assurance, that not even to this very hour can the prince speak without emotion of the 'giant Mirabeau.' I verily believe that this affection has never been supplanted in his bosom. It was not long since he was compelled to break off suddenly, in the midst of an anecdote which he was telling, wherein were mentioned the circumstances of Mirabeau's death. He became all at once silent, and no one dared request him to renew the thread of his story."

"Did you ever hear him allude to those circumstances on any other occasion?"

"Once only," replied C.; "we were alone together in his study in the Rue St. Florentin, one fine summer's evening. I had been reading to him some pages of Thiers's 'History of the Revolution,' and had just closed the book, for want of light, at the mention of Petion.

"'That man,' said the prince, 'was the greatest scoundrel this country ever produced. Mirabeau, whose greatest defect in political conduct was the extraordinary facility with which he gave himself entirely up to the first person possessed of the slightest show of talent, who could take off his own hands any part of the labour, had grown *entiché* with Petion. For it was extraordinary that Mirabeau, whose mental vigour could, Atlas-like, have borne the world, was yet possessed of so much physical indolence that he was seldom known to carry out his own gigantic designs. Upon how many occasions, when his burning eloquence, his energy, had roused the angry lion, has he been known to laugh in pity, to see the *meute* whom his own fiery zeal had urged into hot pursuit, rush madly by, while he himself lay down to rest until some newer game was started. From the

moment that such men as Petion, Brissot, and Condorcet, began to surround Mirabeau, and were admitted into his privacy, with Cabanis, whom he had chosen as his medical attendant, I augured ill for the future fate of my friend. Already were Mirabeau's views and principles grown too tame, too reasonable, for these infuriated demagogues, and they had several times received with ill temper his biting sarcasms at what he called their *exaltation republicaine.* I remember the effect produced upon one occasion at a private meeting of his friends, and the gloom and murmurs of rage with which the concluding words of a speech he had risen to make were received. '*Even supposing, my friends, that royalty were now to be abolished, it is not a republic that must be established—we are not yet ripe for this—it must be a commonwealth.*' From that moment, such is my firm belief, his ruin was decided; but whether he really did meet his death by unfair means; or whether it was the consequence, as was proclaimed at the time, of excitement and fever of the blood, brought on by over-exertion and anxiety, none can tell to this hour. The circumstances of his death will certainly justify, both to his friends and to

posterity, every suspicion of poison; while, on the other hand, there were no symptoms which could not be accounted for by the complaint under which it had from the first been proclaimed that he was sinking.'

"The prince paused for a moment, and I feared that he was about to fall into a reverie, as is sometimes the case when he has called up any touching souvenir of his early days; but presently he resumed:

"'It was just such an evening as this, warm, glowing, early spring, when the fiery spirit of Mirabeau was passing away. The whole thing had been so sudden, so unlooked-for, that we could scarcely believe him in danger, before we learned that he was gone. It was the 2nd of April, and but two days before, he had come to fetch me, full of life and spirit, to dine in the Palais Royal with a party of friends, to talk over the proposition of a law of succession, which he had had for some time under consideration, and which it was his intention to present to the National Assembly. We walked together from my lodgings to the *restaurateur* Robert's, where dinner had been ordered. I thought, in the conversation concerning his *projet*

de loi, that Mirabeau was somewhat more depressed than usual, and that his words came less freely and less flowing from his tongue. He certainly did complain of oppression and pain in his head, and, although the evening was far from sultry, he walked without his hat. I was particularly struck with the lassitude and weariness which he seemed to experience when we had arrived at our destination, and which could not be accounted for by our short slow walk from the Rue St. Honoré. He flung himself listlessly upon one of the benches beside the fountain in the middle of the garden of the Palais Royal, and said, sadly, that he was well pleased that our friends had not yet arrived at the rendezvous, for he was desirous of having a few moments' private conversation with me, not, for once, about public affairs, but concerning his own. "Is it not strange," said he, "that I, who am about to present to the Assembly a law, and to pronounce a speech, the result of long study, upon wills, should never during my whole life, have given one single thought to the making of my own? Do you not think that it's growing high time to think of *every possibility*, with such strange proceedings going on around us—eh, my friend?"

"'I was surprised at this sudden revolution in Mirabeau, for, of all men on earth, he had ever been one of the most thoughtless as to the future, caring little indeed even for the present, living *au jour le jour*, heeding not if the morrow never came; and I could only attribute his unwonted *accablement* to over-exertion and fatigue. He had spoken much in the Assembly, and had, I well knew, passed many nights of late in the framing and preparation of other acts and decrees, to be brought forward before the close of the session.

"'I tried to cheer him with soothing words, and told him it was likely that his day for thinking of this sort of thing was yet far off; that it was a mere fit of depression which caused him to dwell upon such gloomy possibilities; and I ventured to assure him that a good dinner and a glass of our friend Robert's best Chambertin would soon produce a good effect in calming his sudden misgivings about the future.

"'He shook his head mournfully: "These are *banal* phrases, and you know it," said he; "they are unworthy of you. I am neither a child nor a woman, and fear not to listen to the whispering voice of my own soul. The truth is, I *do* feel, at

this moment, most singularly overcome by a sadness hitherto unknown—as if my task being, as it were, but just begun, needed no longer my exertions to finish it." He laid his hand upon my knee, and looked in my face, wherein must have been expressed some anxiety, for I knew not what to think of the mood in which I beheld him, and added gently, "Should anything happen to me before long, you will think of what I have been saying."

"'His voice was so altered, and his countenance so drawn, that I became moved with sympathy, and began to fancy that he really felt very ill, but, with an *amour propre*, which, however misplaced on such an occasion, would still have been compatible with his character, I thought he might have been concealing his state until he could no longer bear up against it. I now listened, in mingled pity and interest, while he explained to me many of his intentions regarding the disposal of his property, in case he should die without a written testament. The education of his natural son, and the proper disposal of his papers, were the subjects upon which he displayed the most concern. He had already taken the precaution to have the greater part of his documents of importance conveyed to a

trusty friend in Holland, and but few of those which remained in France were in his own house. He told me where these few were concealed, and bade me to take charge of them, "In case," he always would repeat, "that anything *fâcheux* (that was his word) should befal him."

"'He then spoke long and earnestly about his political career. In the single hour that we passed thus seated side by side, amid the hurry and bustle of the crowds who were hastening on all sides to the different *restaurateurs* beneath the galleries, did we converse together upon the splendid past, the exciting present, and the TERRIFIC FUTURE. We spoke in earnest whispers, pre-occupied and abstracted from all around, as though we had been conspirators in the bosom of some forest solitude. The whole scene—the day—the hour, I can conjure up in colours fresh and vivid, as though they had vanished but one moment ago, and nothing else had been impressed on the canvas of my memory during all the long years since!'

"I have seldom, very seldom indeed, beheld Prince Talleyrand give way to any demonstration of feeling, even when cause sufficient may have been found in some particular event going on

around him. Perhaps, indeed, I may say that I never saw him betray anything like emotion, excepting on the occasion of this reminiscence of Mirabeau. But he had taught himself from his youth up to subdue speedily all outward display of his inward feeling, and he resumed, in his own subdued manner:

"'It will surprise you when I tell you that scarcely a day passes, even now, that I do not call to mind that scene: in fact, it is often forced upon me by the occurrences which are continually taking place before my eyes. It was a cunning device of the ancient seers to affirm that the gift of prophecy might sometimes fall on men about to die. It is not thus; but the words of those we loved are garnered up, when they who perhaps had spoken them many times before unheeded, can speak them no more, and we remember them as something new, although 'tis likely we may have heard them oft and oft before.

"'Mirabeau had doubtless many times, as upon this occasion, held forth to me his fears and doubts, his hopes and his despair, but I remember it not. I can find place in memory for but this one interview, and I have treasured up each word and

phrase with a jealous vigilance, as though they had been uttered during the brief visit of a spirit. I had never been thoroughly inspired with the conviction of the Herculean powers of the man until this conversation. He seemed to toy with difficulties; nothing was beyond his grasp; nothing beyond the power of his will to bend. There is scarcely a single *prévision* of his which time has not realized, and often am I startled even now at events, which, seemingly the consequence of yesterday, had been foretold by him that evening, beside the fountain in the Palais Royal. He gave me many kind admonitions and warnings against some who were in our intimacy, and whom he deemed unworthy of friendship. He counselled me respecting the path that I should take in case this *quelque chose de fâcheux*, which seemed to haunt him so strangely, should take place, while affairs were in such a troubled state. In every case did I follow this advice, and in every case had I cause to rejoice that I had done so. Mirabeau was certainly inspired on that evening—he was sublime. I remember being struck with a saying of his, which I have since found of the greatest value. After having traced out for me a plan of conduct,

in case public events should take the turn which he was anticipating, he concluded by saying, solemnly, "But, above all things, my friend, slight not public opinion. Listen with open ears to the public clamour—for remember that the voice of the people is the VOICE OF GOD!"

"'It was thus we conversed for more than an hour, during which I learned more of Mirabeau than I had done during the many years of strict friendship in which we had lived together. I should have regretted him far less, had this confidence never taken place, for I should less have learned to estimate his stupendous intellect, and the grandeur of his mighty heart. As you may suppose, I could have listened, entranced as I was, until midnight, and was angry when Condorcet, who was of our party, came running gaily up to our bench, and seated himself beside us, with a loud exclamation of surprise at the unusual gravity of our demeanour. Of course the spell was broken at once, and the conversation became general. Soon afterwards, our two other friends joined us, and we adjourned to Robert's, at that time the first *restaurateur* in Paris, where we found dinner waiting.

"'The dinner was gay enough. I alone, of all the company, was sad, and spoke but little. Mirabeau, at first absorbed and pre-occupied, gradually yielding to the influence which he never could resist, that of wine and good fellowship, by degrees shook off the recollection of the colloquy we had had together so short a time before, and became as usual the light and life of the *réunion*. It would be a hopeless task to endeavour to recal one tithe of all the brilliant sayings, the startling epigrams, uttered by Mirabeau during this his last flash of existence. I had never beheld him so excited, so madly gay. He drank largely, and the wine seemed to inflame his blood until his excitement bordered on delirium. He raved—he sang—he spoke in loud harangues—he laughed fiercely at us all—at the court, at the people, at himself, in short, at everything; and our companions hailed with loud shouts and applause every *bon mot* that he uttered. I alone could not share in this strange mirth, for I was yet shaken by the solemn foreboding, the dismal presentiment with which he had inspired me.

"'At about four o'clock in the morning, the spirit, no longer to be controlled even by the

gigantic physical strength which he possessed, gave way at last. He complained that his head felt heavy, and said that the daylight, which was just beginning to peep in from the window opposite, fatigued his sight. Coffee was then proposed before we parted, and Mirabeau eagerly took a cup, which he himself poured out and sweetened. His hand trembled violently as he raised it to his lips, and he had scarcely replaced the cup upon the table when he fell forward with his head upon his hands, exclaiming, "My God! what strange new pain is this?"

"'He rallied again, however, presently, and bade the waiter fetch a coach instantly, saying that he foresaw an attack of spasms in the chest, and that he knew his remedy, which was a hot bath and fumigations as quickly as possible. He requested me alone to accompany him, and from that moment until his death I never left his side. We drove to the public baths on the Boulevard, opposite to the street where Mirabeau then lived, the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. Here his sufferings increased to such a frightful degree that I sent for Cabanis, who, however, did not arrive until the patient had left the bath, after having taken, against my most

earnest desire, a large bowl of milk and cocoa, of which he was extremely fond. Strange to say, he was considerably better after this, and left the bath for his own house, *on foot*. It is this circumstance, I have no doubt, which has given consistency to the belief that he had been *poisoned*, as it is averred that, had the mess of milk not been absorbed as *antidote*, Mirabeau must, in the state in which he was at the time, have died immediately on taking it. Such sweeping reasoning as this is of course beneath comment.

"'It was with some difficulty that he could be prevailed upon to go to bed. He resisted to the last, declaring that the bright morning sun, which by this time was streaming in glory through his windows, would renovate him better than any physician's advice. Soon after he had lain down, however, a change, from which he never rallied, came over him, and he continued to get worse until he died. It was a dreadful sight to behold his face, all swollen and bloated, and speckled with livid spots, and the white foam which gathered upon his lips as fast as his attendants could wipe it away. It certainly should not have been made a public show, which, before the end of the day, the death-

bed of poor Mirabeau had become. Those foul suspicions of treachery and poison had their origin, I doubt not, in the extraordinary symptoms which his disease presented.

" 'Never from the first instant did Mirabeau deceive himself, or shrink from the decree. It has never been my lot to witness a death so dignified, so sublime. In the morning, through the day, surrounded by friends and admirers, all was well; but then came the silent watches of the night, when his whole heart was bared to me, his only comforter. Not once did he swerve, neither did he throw back one single look of regret over the road which he had for so many years been travelling. Quite the contrary;—he met the grim enemy with a courage and equanimity of temper, the gift of a philosophy of the highest order.

" 'If popularity could have satisfied the soul of Mirabeau, he surely must have died content. His house was besieged, and, from the moment he was declared to be in danger, the very street became impassable from the crowd of messengers who thronged his door. High and low, rich and poor, felt alike an interest in the fate of the great man who was to protect them between monarchy and

anarchy, which it is certain the mighty intellect of Mirabeau would have made an easy task.

" 'He lingered thus in pain and agony during the whole of this day and night, and died in my arms on the following morning at eight o'clock, having preserved his firmness of intellect until the very last moment. It *is* true (for there were some absurd stories afloat) that, about five minutes before he actually expired, he wrote on a piece of paper (for speech was already gone) these words: "*It is far easier to die than to sleep!*" The movement which he made to place the paper in my hand was his last. He never stirred afterwards. I have kept that precious scrap of writing through every change of fortune; and in the hope of keeping it to my dying day, have taken measures to have it preserved when I shall be no more. During his illness, he frequently reverted to the conversation which had passed between us on the bench at the Palais Royal. He told me that he then already *knew* that his fate was sealed, and dared me to maintain a conviction of the contrary. Throughout my whole life, I have ever resisted superstitious feeling, but there certainly does seem something strange and unaccountable in this

gloomy foreboding of Mirabeau, that gives the lie direct to all one's predetermined disbelief in the doctrine of "presentiments."

"'The generation of to-day, contrary to anticipation, has learnt to undervalue Mirabeau; but I think a re-action may come even in your time, because he was not a mere orator, whose fame must die when his powers of speech are gone, but he was also the greatest thinker of his age. How would the face of the country have been changed had he lived but a few months, nay, even a few weeks longer! This has been so strongly felt by all parties, that there were many who blindly *rejoiced* at his death, even among those who had known and loved him; while those who had most cause to mourn, declared, in their terror, that he must have been poisoned.

"'I have told you all the facts connected with his illness and his death, and with me you will cease to feel astonishment that the suspicion of such a crime should have gone abroad, when you consider the suddenness of his illness, its short duration, and the dreadful sufferings amid which his life was closed. These must have been terrific; for, about an hour before his death, he turned

angrily round to Cabanis, and said, 'A physician who is a true friend to the patient would not hesitate at giving a dose of opium strong enough to quiet such pain as this for ever.' And yet, so powerful was the *morale* of the man, that even when thus writhing in agony, he could not refrain from laughing most heartily at some popular *lazzis* which were bandying between a screaming *ecaillière* and the lackey of some person of quality, who were contending for the first hearing of the bulletin of the past night, and which reached his ear through the open window looking on the court-yard below.

"'The public grief at the death of Mirabeau told more for his worth and greatness than whole volumes of written eulogium could now do. Perhaps there never before was an example of a *chef de parti* having been mourned as sincerely by the adverse party as by his own. The court was in consternation; the queen concealed not her despair, for she foresaw the dread consequence; the last barrier between the furious people and the angry *noblesse* was down, and the bitter tide would, ere long, rush in through the breach which the falling of this goodly corner-stone had made. I myself was so overcome by regret at the sudden

loss which I had sustained, that I retired for some little time to Auteuil, scarcely daring to look at the future, or to speculate for an instant upon what was next to happen.'

"Such," said C., "is the account given of the death of Mirabeau, by one who was with him from the moment of his first being seized with illness to that when the troublous scene closed for ever. The history contains, perhaps, as fine a moral lesson as ever was preached from pulpit-desk or read in school.

"The sentiment which subsisted between Sièyes and the prince was of a different nature. There might have existed, in the origin, some little feeling of jealousy between them; it is certain they never were free from the *esprit de critique* indicative of rivalry, either secret or avowed. On no one subject did they differ more than on the subject of Mirabeau, Sièyes refusing him the mighty powers that the prince loved to allow him; and I have been witness to long and severe discussions on this one topic alone.

The prince was fond of telling a story *à propos* of Sièyes, illustrative of the theory of great results from little causes. He was one day walking with

him through the Tuileries, when, just opposite to the gate in the Place de la Concorde, a little beggar girl, leading an old woman on crutches, came up to solicit alms. Sièyes gave her a sou, which, in her hurry to seize, she let fall, and the coin rolled under the hoofs of the charger mounted by the *garde du corps* on duty at the gate. The child pressed forward to pick it up, but each time that she stooped, almost at the risk of her life, the soldier, apparently glad to divert the *ennui* of sentry by an event of this kind, spurred the animal to one side, and the wretched little girl, to avoid being crushed to death, was compelled to withdraw, to renew her endeavours again as soon as the beast stood still, but each time with as little success as before. The whole scene—the terror of the child —the overboiling wrath of the old cripple, and the insolent and cruel mirth of the *garde du corps*, presented altogether a most exciting spectacle, and, combined with the angry passions of the crowd, who were not slow to take the part of the child, formed a picture not easily forgotten.

"Sièyes, finding that the people were growing angry, thought it best to put an end to the scene at once; so, giving the girl a double sou, he bade her

begone, which injunction she immediately obeyed, and the crowd forthwith dispersed. But Sièyes remained thoughtful and pre-occupied during the whole evening; and, when he parted with his friend, he said, 'I have been thinking over the occurrence we witnessed together this morning. Something must be done for the people. *When they have an army of their own*, they will not run the risk of being insulted by hired mercenaries.'

"This was the very first idea which had ever entered human brain respecting the formation of a national guard. Once started, the idea found favour with all the disaffected. Sièyes himself planned and invented the *projet*, and, by dint of perseverance, got it accepted some long time afterwards. Little did the proud *Garde Nationale*, when they marched to the frontier—when they dictated laws to the country—when they barricaded Paris—dream that they owed their existence and creation to a half-penny which a starving beggar wench found it hard to pick out of the gutter!

"*Apropos* of this story, there is an addition to it which the prince always gives us, and which you, who are come of a superstitious race, and plead guilty to the accusation of superstition yourself,

will perhaps like to hear. M. de Talleyrand had taken peculiar notice of the soldier who bestrode the charger. He was a remarkably handsome youth, quite an exquisite, an *incroyable*, with coal-black moustaches and *royale*, and snow-white powdered hair,—a combination that certainly gives a piquant expression to the countenance, which all the fine chestnut hair or raven locks in the world, however redundant, however silky, can never impart. Besides, it suited so well with the costume of the period, that it would seem as if the one had been invented on purpose to show off the other. However, to my story. You may well imagine that the old cripple had not left the spot, however well satisfied she might be with the unexpected generosity of Sièyes, without loading the air with curses upon the head of the young *garde du corps*. She was a filthy hag, blear-eyed, and lame; and it was fearful to hear her, as she tossed her rags aloft upon the wind, utter such awful maledictions, in a screaming, discordant voice, that the blood ran cold to listen. The soldier sat in calm defiance on his saddle, in the prettiest attitude imaginable. Stiff, starched, on duty, without moving a muscle, with his hat on one side, and his hand bent, and resting on his

thigh, he looked straight at the woman, for fear of being suspected of wishing to shun her gaze; but he betrayed no heed of her words, save by a slight smile, which curled his lip, whereon rested a green leaf (as was the fashion among the bucks of that day), to keep it moist, and prevent its cracking by exposure to the sun.

"The old witch, enraged at finding that her words produced no greater effect, at length raised her crutch in the young man's face, and shrieked a fearful malison. 'Proud as you are, jackanapes, I shall live to see your soul in h—, and your body devoured by the dogs!' With this, she hobbled away, and we also turned aside in disgust, while the young man remained immovable and unconcerned, as though the words had not been addressed to him at all.

"The event I have been relating took place before the breaking out of the revolution. Now rejoice, and listen, thou northern believer in prophecy and witches. The very day after the return of the king and queen from Versailles, when traversing the Place Louis Quinze, M. de Talleyrand was attracted by a crowd gathered round one of the deep fossés, by which the place is intersected,

and, on going up, there beheld the body of the unhappy *garde-du-corps*, lying all mangled and bloody at the bottom. Some men belonging to the police were endeavouring to catch at the corpse with hooks, in order to drag it to the surface; and, as they did so, it was discovered that a great part of the throat and breast had been gnawed away by starving dogs during the night. The poor lad had been doubtless murdered by some unknown hand during the bustle and confusion of the previous day, and thrown into this convenient place, and thus was the prophecy fulfilled."

C. rose as he finished his story, and gazing around, said, laughingly, "See you now the misfortune of having to do with professed story-tellers? We began with the history of this unfinished hunting seat, and have paused at the beginning of the French Revolution!"

"I need not lose by the delay, however," said I; "you can tell me the tale of this ruin as we go home."

"I remember," replied C., "the sight of the building brought to mind the subject, which has formed a study of mine ever since I have been with the prince—his powerful and varied influence

with all who approach him—and it was thus that I was led into this long digression. This building, which you now see so ruined and degraded, was intended to have been one of the most remarkable objects of the whole country round. It was planned and designed by the late Princess T——, as a surprise and *galanterie* for the prince, who had once, when taking a drive in her company, expressed an opinion that this would be a good site for a *maison de plaisance.* The princess said nothing in reply, but immediately on her return to the château, despatched a courier with letters to Chateauroux, containing orders for architects, surveyors, masons, and all the *attirail* of building, to be sent immediately to the spot; and, in less time than you can well imagine, the foundations of a goodly-sized building, with courts and *dépendances,* befitting the residence of a repose-seeking prince, were erected. Expense was to be considered nought—despatch everything—workmen were to be employed night and day until the edifice was completed. All this was, moreover, to be kept a profound secret until the building was quite ready to inhabit, when the princess proposed leading the company at the château through the

wood to the spot, and then, enjoying their surprise, to request their attendance at a ball and collation of her own providing, in the *maison de plaisance*, 'which she had built as a present to the Prince de Talleyrand.'

"Meanwhile the prince, being again abroad with the princess on another fine day—in quite an opposite direction, almost drove her mad, by suddenly stopping to admire another view. 'Of all places in the wood, this is the exact spot I should choose, were I consulted, to erect a *maison de plaisance!*' said he.

"The princess was glad to hear this in time, although it gave her great trouble and caused immense outlay; however, she consoled herself with the hope that she should succeed at last in delighting the prince. She immediately gave orders for the transport of the workmen and materials to this new 'Folie,' and once more did the hammer and saw resound through the silent wood, and again did the grinding cart-wheels disturb another solitude. Scarcely, however, were the foundations of this second pavilion laid, when the prince again disconcerted all the plans of the poor princess, by exclaiming one day after dinner, 'I drove this

morning by the river side—what a beautiful *point-de-vue* there is down by the Willows; most assuredly if I ever built a *maison de plaisance*, that is the spot I should choose.'

"This was too much. The princess was completely overcome. She burst into tears, and left the table, much to the astonishment of the company. Nothing could persuade her that the allusion was not wilful on the part of the prince, and she was in actual despair of being able to please him. She regretted not the large sums which she had expended, and which had already grown serious, but only the misfortune under which she had laboured in not having chosen the right spot. The prince laughed heartily at the joke, and, during the whole of that season, his favourite promenade was to the hill upon which the magnificent, unfinished Folie Princesse remains a memento of the devotion of her highness, and of her inability to give satisfaction.

"This lady was one of the '*illustrations*' of Valençay, and her death has caused an immense vacuum in our circle. Both by birth and marriage allied to many of the sovereign families of Europe —with a colossal fortune—with the tradition and

remains of great beauty—she gave up even her own identity, to become a mere part and parcel of the *apanage* of the Prince de Talleyrand, content to live in his shadow, and to borrow her importance from him alone. There was a great deal that was touching, from its total disinterestedness, amid all the absurdity of this romantic devotion.

"The prince was often annoyed by the extent to which she carried this *culte*, but, *en homme d'esprit*, he generally succeeded in throwing back the ridicule, which he felt was likely to attach to him, upon herself, and scrupled not to enliven the dulness of the evening circle by drawing her out; while she, poor soul, too happy to occupy his attention even for an instant, consented willingly to become his butt; and thus it often happened that the Princess T——, daughter, widow, and sister of princes and heroes, was employed to divert the *ennui* of many a little *gentilhomme campagnard*, or *hobereau de province*, who might, as matter of form and neighbourly feeling, chance to be invited to dine at the château. But, as I tell you, although perfectly aware of this—for she was by no means wanting in penetration—she cared not so that '*ce cher prince*' found amusement; indeed, I think

she even felt honoured by the preference accorded to her above the other guests.

"However, she failed not upon other occasions to avenge herself upon these witnesses of her discomfiture, and in her turn crushed without pity every one around her who was not the 'prince,' or allied in some way with him, or one whom he delighted to honour. With others, never was there a more *rogue et fière Allemande*, and in spite of her good nature and generosity, she had more enemies than many who sought less applause.

"She was the most eccentric person I ever met with; the last of a race of which it will be impossible, from the change in human ideas, ever to behold another specimen. In her youth she had been most beautiful, and still retained, saving the loss of an eye, traces of loveliness even in advanced age. She could not be called either clever or witty, but was the cause of such interminable wit in others, of such endless good sayings on the part of the prince, that Valençay, to those who were accustomed to her society, seemed dull *à perir* when she was not there. She had the greatest fund of originality and natural vivacity that could be possessed by any human being. Her ideas could

not be made, by any force of reasoning or persuasion, to follow the tide of improvement of the times, and she could never be taught to believe that the revolution had wrought any change in the relative positions of the aristocracy and the people, but continued, to the latest period of her life, to treat all plebeians and *roturiers* as though they had still been serfs and vassals, subject at her will and pleasure to *détresse* and *corvée*. She was an invaluable specimen of the old insolent noblesse; and after a day spent in her company, you might retire to rest, no longer wondering at the horrors of the great revolution, nor yet at the hatred by which they had been instigated.

On one occasion, she had nearly set the whole province in an uproar by an unseasonable display of what the prince was wont to call her *impertinence Régence*. A large party had been invited to dinner at the château, a party in honour of the arrival of some high and illustrious visitor at Valençay; I think there were even scions of royalty among the guests. In short, it was one of the gaudy days of the castle, when the flaming yellow liveries, and the antique silver, and the royal gifts, were all displayed. Of course the *préfet* of the

department, the *maire* of Valençay, the *curé*, and, in short, all the authorities of the place had been invited, and with true provincial punctuality had arrived at the exact hour named in the invitation, which, as usual in modern times, was long before the princely host expected to receive his guests; and, when they were ushered into the drawing-room, they found that none of the family had as yet appeared, and that they would be consequently compelled to amuse themselves as they best could until the ringing of the bell, which would gather together the stray members of the household.

"In a short time, however, the great doors of the drawing-room were thrown back with a loud *fracas*, and in sailed, in all the majesty of stiffened silks and fluttering plumes, her highness the Princess T——. The troubled provincials immediately with one accord turned from the chimney, where they had been talking in mysterious murmurs concerning the mighty individuals whom they were to meet at dinner, and moved in a body with sundry low bows, and a great display of gymnastic prostrations, towards the fair princess. The latter stood for a moment, and gazed as they advanced, then turning suddenly round to the grinning domestic, who had remained standing at the door:

"'Fool!' exclaimed she, indignantly, 'did I not bid you ascertain if anybody had arrived, before I troubled myself to come down to the *salon?*'

"'Yes, princesse, and I came myself to see,' answered the servant, looking rather puzzled and embarrassed, first at his mistress, then at the guests, who stood wondering where the questioning would lead to, 'and when I found these gentlemen here, I——'

"'Idiot!' interrupted the princess, 'not to know your business better; remember that such as these are not anybody, but NOBODY.'

"With these words she tossed out of the room, pointing with her fan over her shoulder at the poor stupified provincials, whose rage and mortification defy description. They were not slow to spread the tale of her insolence and haughtiness throughout the country round, and the circumstance caused the princess to be viewed with no very friendly eye, as you may well imagine.

"Soon after this occurrence, having occasion to visit Paris, she left Valençay in her carriage, drawn by four horses, and driven by the postmaster himself. Her highness was always in a most tremendous hurry, and loved to be driven at a tremendous rate. This the postmaster knew well, as he had

been in the habit of driving her for years. He accordingly took much pains upon the occasion to which I refer, to go as slowly as possible, in order to vex and worry the princess, whose temper was not long in breaking forth, and she presently began by calling after the driver in the most imperious manner to hasten his speed. This injunction not being attended to with as much alacrity as she could have wished, she began to pour forth volleys of abuse, seasoned with sundry fierce sounding exclamations and oaths in the Polish language, to which, upon great occasions like the present, she was wont to give utterance, (according to her own account, quite unconsciously.) The man bore this for some little time, perhaps rather more diverted than otherwise at the thought of the trick he was playing one of those 'infernal aristocrats;' until at length, no longer able to contain her indignation, the princess seized the footstool which was at the bottom of the carriage, and hurled it at the postillion, with such unsteady aim however, that the missile flew far above his head. 'Dolt!' shouted she, standing upright in the carriage, and gesticulating fiercely, 'do you imagine you are carrying a load of manure to market?' '*Ma foi!*' exclaimed

the postmaster, coolly dismounting from the saddle, 'many's the load of manure I've taken which has fetched at market twenty times more than you would have done there!' With these words, he deliberately set about unharnessing the horses from the carriage, and bidding the other postillion do likewise, he turned back towards Valençay, leaving the carriage standing alone in the midst of the long solitary road, with not a human habitation in sight and night coming on. The shrieks and menaces of the lady were all in vain; the man having paused to light his pipe, with the greatest *sang froid*, jogged by the carriage window, cracking his whip with fiendish enjoyment of her terror, until he got to the very bottom of the hill, and was lost sight of. The princess could never be prevailed upon to tell the sequel of the story, nor of the means by which she had been extricated from her most mortifying situation; and, as neither of her tall valets nor her talkative maids could ever be induced to betray the secret, it was thought that she had compelled them all four to turn out into the road and drag the carriage to some wayside ale-house, where she could rest till horses arrived. I know not if this was the case, but she certainly was quite capable of doing it.

"A goodly volume might be filled with her *naïvetés* and unconscious witticisms; for it was her total indifference to the good things that she uttered, and her contempt for the effect which they produced, that constituted their greatest charm.

"I shall never forget the effect produced in the *salon* one evening by an event which occurred a short time before the prince's embassy to London, and which served to *égayer* the society for some time. Among other ancient traditions of the courtly life of former days which she loved to keep up, and one, too, which completely coincided with her tastes and habits, was the custom of the *petit billet*, a usage which has been completely lost since the time of the great revolution, and which might be taken as a specimen of the time-killing, fiddle-faddle occupations in which the *noblesse* of that day passed their lives.

"This custom of the *petit billet* still exists in many of the old families wherein courtesy and etiquette are still maintained, at least among the elder members. It consisted in writing a short note of inquiry every morning to the person beloved, who answered it likewise in writing, for no verbal message would have been received. Of

course the contents of the note could not be much varied. There could be nothing to say but day after day the same 'good morrow,' with inquiries how the night had been passed, and other questions of small interest, which the present generation, who live deep and fast, expending their sentiments and energies on greater things, have no time to make. I myself know a married couple of the old school who, like all married couples of the old (French) school, have been separated *de corps et de biens* for the last forty years, and who have never missed once during the whole of that time sending the *petit billet de matin*. I was once thoughtless enough to rally the lady upon this constancy, when she replied, angrily, 'Monsieur, although Monsieur le Comte and myself may not choose to live together, yet our mutual position, and the rank we both hold in society, prevent our enjoying the privilege of dispensing with the common customs and formalities of the circles in which we have both been bred. In renouncing all idea of love for each other, we have not renounced good breeding.'

"Well, the princess, who was, as I tell you, *à*

c. ival upon etiquette with regard to the prince, never appeared in the morning without having been preceded by her *petit billet*, although the prince never thought fit to encourage her absurdity by sending a written answer. One evening, she had retired earlier than usual, and, shortly after, just as the company was breaking up, a note was handed to the prince by the princess's valet. We were all rather alarmed at first, fearing that she might have been seized with illness; but presently the billet was handed about amid roars of laughter; there was nought to fear; it ran thus: 'Cher prince. How are you this morning? I myself am far from well, having passed a wretched night, although when I *did* sleep, I dreamed of you, which was some little consolation amid all my agitation and restlessness.' The note bore the morrow's date, and had been given by the careless servant some twelve or fourteen hours too soon! Upon inquiry, it proved to be the habit of the princess to write these little billets over night, to avoid being disturbed in the morning; they were laid on her toilet table, whence the valet had taken the one in question, without inquiry and without reflection. Of course the prince was merciless; the Princess

de T—— furnished the standing joke of the season, and was never left in peace until some new absurdity caused the story of her 'precautionary measure' to fade in the background."

CHAPTER VII.

RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY LIFE, BY PRINCE TALLEYRAND.

"It is a most extraordinary circumstance," said I to C., one evening, as we sat together in the little turret-chamber, "that no well-authenticated life of the prince has ever been written. It would, I have no doubt, attract more attention than any work of the kind which has appeared for years. Why do you not attempt the task? You are better qualified, from the length of time you have been in his intimacy, from your very admiration of the man, to undertake the task, than any one else now living."

"You flatter me," said C., smiling; "the undertaking would be far beyond my power, or, indeed, it would be within the limit of the capabilities

but of one man alone. The sole biographer of Prince Talleyrand must be Prince Talleyrand himself. Any clever, well-informed historian might give the facts of the prince's life, but who but himself could render to posterity a satisfactory account of the *motives* which had led to action, the *consequences* which have accrued from the various decisions which he has taken, and which, in most instances, as he himself is always declaring, have been totally in opposition to the results foreseen? Such a biography of himself as *he* could write, would be a literary monument as lasting as the world itself. It would be the *secret* history of every government of Europe for the last sixty years—the private memoirs of every distinguished individual would have to be incorporated into such a biography, where, of necessity, every distinguished individual in Europe *must* be made to play a part. I know that M. de Talleyrand has been for years past compiling his diplomatic memoirs, but, by a singular infatuation, he has proclaimed his intention of not permitting their publication to the world until forty years after his death. This determination, *à la* Voltaire, is singularly in accordance with the character of the man, who is always re-

peating so playfully, 'No one can doubt my powers of waiting.'

"Some of those most interested in the matter, to whom he has communicated his malicious decision, rail loudly against such a determination; whilst others, with perhaps equally good reason, as loudly applaud; so that it is evident to the unconcerned looker-on, that whatever may be his secret motive for thus deciding, it is already justified by the different passions which it has excited. He has in this, as in everything else, displayed the depth of his reflective powers, and refused to sacrifice high interests and grave results to a paltry feeling of *amour propre*. He has reflected that, in those intervening years, all the loud baying pack of fierce detractors of his fame will have yelped forth their calumnies—the smaller fry will also have all expended their puny efforts, and then *he* will come and call upon posterity to judge between him and them. Doubt it not—posterity will answer the appeal. The next generation will be more just than his own. The fierce passions, the deadly struggles, the political hatreds, amid which his own existence has been passed, will all have died away, and men will sit in calm, unbiassed

judgment on the various actions of his life, and will be the better able to pronounce their verdict when they have beheld the *consequences* of his counsels; when they shall have been enabled to compare his adoration of his country, his indifference to its *rulers*, with the slavish self-interest, the narrow-minded, mercenary views of those with whom he had so often to contend.

" Believe me, a man must entertain a tolerably good opinion of his own discrimination, and have the organ of self-esteem developed in no mean degree, who could sit down coolly with a pretension of giving to the world a correct, nay, even a *lucid* life of Prince Talleyrand. He has out-lived the greater portion of the comrades of his youth, of whom even then he lived so far in advance, that it was said of him, he had 'comrades and colleagues, but no contemporaries.' Long before middle age, he had learned that, in public life, the one thing needful is discretion; while he it was who first published to mankind the discovery he had made, that 'speech was given to man to conceal his thoughts.' Therefore, it is not probable that there exists a soul who could ever have penetrated sufficiently into the wily statesman's confi-

dence ever to gain enough knowledge of his aims and views, to *account* for the different changes in his principles, with which he has been so taunted by all parties. There is not a single epoch of his life which is not, besides, so bound up with anecdotes and incidents of the 'times in which he lived,' that often the most simple recital of facts, as connected with any adventure in which he may have been engaged, might give deep offence in other quarters, and cause recrimination, and perhaps even, in some cases, litigation, on the part of other high personages, whose names would have to be brought forward.

"No man was ever made the object of so much unjust vituperation as the Prince de Talleyrand, of calumnies which have been accepted by the credulous with as much good faith as proofs of holy writ; while not one single *proof* of perfidy or baseness has ever been brought against him—nothing but supposition, for the most part ill-sustained, and sometimes even completely belied by his subsequent conduct. Notwithstanding the apparent freedom with which he admitted all his *entourage* to his intimates, how little is really known of his private life! Notwithstanding the

greediness with which the public have always sucked in any stray anecdote, any fugitive *bon mot*, or axiom of this great man's, yet how strangely ignorant do they still remain of his real character —how blind to the real grandeur of soul, which he ever displayed amid the most trying circumstances—where any other than he would have clutched at the shadow, he let both the empty substance and the emptier shadow pass, while he calmly paused for that which was to follow. The truth is this—the *mind* is made the judge of the public character; the *heart* alone can understand the value of the private one.

"I have often myself seen him smile at the idea of any one attempting his biography, and, whenever by chance he found himself compelled to receive at Valençay any of the petty journalists, the stray collectors of *bon mots* and epigrams for the *salons* of Paris, I have beheld him take a malicious pleasure in mystifying their credulity by relations of the most extravagant adventures connected with himself, or with the great public men with whom he had come in contact. One of his keenest enjoyments consists in making me read, while he is at his toilet, these same anecdotes as

they appear in the peculiar journal for which the poor *gobe-mouche* has been catering. As I have said before, there is so much that is real, and so much that is false, mixed up with everything connected with the prince, that the historian who would seek to be veracious, finds himself completely baffled. On the other hand, the world of anecdote is our own. He is no niggard, in sooth, of his rich store of souvenirs, and loves to dispense them to his intimates with a bounteous hand. The mention of an obscure name, the raising of the simplest doubt, will draw forth, when he is in the vein, such ample fund of amusement, that many a thick, closely-printed volume might have been compiled from this source alone.

"I remember that, one evening, by some unaccountable circumstance which I now forget, we were fated to spend the hours from dinner till bed-time alone. The ladies of the family had gone to do honour to the bridal of a rich vassal in the neighbourhood of the château, and had most especially recommended the prince to retire early, as he was labouring under severe cold on the chest. You will scarcely believe me when I tell you that we remained up together until daylight—so absorbed

was he in the remembrance of events of years gone by, and of which some simple observation on my part had touched, as it were, the galvanic train, and roused the reminiscences which had slumbered perhaps since his youth, while I thought not of rest or sleep so long as he talked on. I could have listened until doomsday. One of the subjects on which he spoke that evening was the very one upon which I have just been entertaining you; that of his memoirs. There had been an advertisement in one of the Paris papers that morning announcing sketches of 'the Arch-Diplomatist, from Original Documents.'

"'This is about the fortieth attempt of the kind within the last dozen years,' said he, in answer to my information of the circumstance, 'and, what is more astonishing is the fact, as I am told, of their having all met with more or less success. The public love to be duped, and seek with eagerness every occasion to be deceived. It is the charlatans alone whose numbers fail, dupes are never wanting.'

"Had I not been already convinced of the utter impossibility which must ever exist of any individual of our day being able to do justice to the

'Life of Prince Talleyrand,' that evening's conversation, in the old Perrault-looking drawing-room of Valençay, would have amply proved it. A volume might be filled with the anecdotes he told me merely relating to the first years of his youth —just at his *début* in the fashionable world, before the revolution. He began with the *Séminaire*, recounting with peculiar delight the history of his intimate associates there—his prodigious memory seeming to grasp the most trifling details relating to each with as much vigour and freshness as though he were speaking of yesterday. Many were the curious customs, the picturesque observances, of the old place, the very tradition of which has since been lost, obliterated, and trodden under foot in the mire of the revolution, and of which he alone, in the whole world, was left the chronicler.

"'It cannot be denied,' said he, in speaking of this establishment, 'that vice and infidelity had crept in there as elsewhere, as how could it be otherwise, when all the talent and brilliancy which have dazzled youth in all ages were on the side of doubt and irreligion? And yet there were still some bright examples, some few specimens of a

higher order of beings, gathered among us, whose light shone out yet brighter from amid the utter darkness by which they were surrounded. The histories of some of those young men would better serve as themes for novel or romance than for book of saintly lore; for the revolution dispersed them right and left, and sent them forth to the world, some to battle with their fierce, pent-up passions, others to struggle with their timid fears.

"'Not all the romance that ever was written could equal in interest the plain narration of some of the adventures which, in after life, befel my fellow-students. Some perished beneath the revolutionary axe, voluntary martyrs—others were found in the ranks of Napoleon's army, wearing the epaulettes and moustaches of his *avant garde*, or caracoling among his voltigeurs. There still live some few who occupy posts of honour and of trust, which the government of Louis Dix-huit bestowed in utter ignorance of antecedents, while many of those who had mourned their bondage the most bitterly, lived to regret it, with yearning for the quiet which it yielded, and which they have lost for ever.

"'One of the most striking examples of the

vanity of human wishes may be found in the history of Eugène de B——, who had been my fellow salver-bearer at the visit of the Bishop of Bordeaux to St. Sulpice. This was considered an office of honour, and bestowed upon the two best wranglers of the season. My companion was one of the handsomest young men I ever beheld; tall and dark, with all the fire of the south in his black eye and swarthy complexion, and the impress of high descent stamped upon his features. He was the natural son of a nobleman holding a high office about the court, and might hope through this channel to rise to the loftiest dignity and honour in the church. It was not known who his mother was, but it was whispered amongst us that she must have been either Jewess or Bohemian—a belief to which his singular eye and chiselled features gave rise. He was of a proud, impassioned character, violent and indomitable; one with whom his teachers and those in authority were obliged to pause before they ventured to rush into open warfare. Neither penitence nor reprimand had ever been able to tame his violent, irascible nature, and, on more than one occasion, had it not been for the great honour which his learning and acquirements con-

ferred on the establishment, he would have been expelled.

"'His fiery soul revolted at the idea of entering the Church. I have seen him shudder with disgust as he donned the black serge dress which denoted his calling, and absolutely refuse to walk in his rank in the processions, which, at certain festivals, formed part of the ceremonies of the day. His dreams were all of a military life and military glory. He told me himself, that, proud as he was, he had *knelt* to his father to beg him to suffer him to embrace the profession of arms. He would have been a Knight of Malta—a volunteer—even a private soldier—anything, so long as he might be permitted to follow the bent of his inclination, and join the army; but his father had said coldly, that his interest in the army was all swallowed up by his other sons, and, besides, that he disapproved greatly of this clashing of interests between young men of the same name, who yet bore it under circumstances so different; that he would not countenance any change of profession; that he might rely on his protection so long as he continued obedient to his commands, and that a fortune, such as would satisfy his most ardent ambition, awaited

him on the completion of his studies, if he would remain content in the calling which his relatives had chosen for him.

"'From such reasoning there was no appeal, and poor Eugène remained at the *Séminaire*, cursing his fate, and nursing his bitterness against the existing order of things, which thus left him helpless and without defence, the slave of another's will, to follow the very calling he so much despised. You will readily believe that, with these sentiments, he was one of those who yielded the most readily to the influence of the new doctrines which the philosophers of that day had begun to preach with so much success. He had frequently been severely reprimanded, and sometimes even harshly punished for his undisguised approval of the new tenets, for among his class-fellows, he sought not to conceal his sentiments, but proclaimed aloud his contempt of the aristocracy, his hatred of the oppressors of the people, his opinion that the king would one day be taken to task for his weak administration; and, above all, his tongue waged loudest war against the queen, poor Marie Antoinette, '*Autrichienne*,' *l'étrangère*, the 'cruel she-wolf,' the heartless dissipator of the *deniers du peuple*.

"'He left the *Séminaire* with these feelings still existing; he was much younger than myself, and I lost sight of him for some time; I only heard accidentally that he had been appointed to serve one of the chapels of Notre Dame, merely while awaiting a vacancy to occur in some rich prebend or fat abbaye, to which his father might have credit to get him appointed. Meanwhile, the revolution broke out, and Eugène stood free to take the path from which he had been forcibly driven while dependent on his father's will. Of course, after what I knew of his character, it did not in the least surprise me to learn that he had thrown his frock *aux orties*, or that he had chosen to enter the army; but what really did surprise me to a great degree was the astounding information which was given me by his brother, the Marquis de B——, that he had attached himself to the broken remnants of the *gardes-du-corps;* that he had followed them most pertinaciously as a volunteer; that he had twice been severely wounded in defending the queen from the fury of the mob; and that he was the individual who had carried the dauphin, at the very risk and peril of his life, across the Allée des Feuillans, on the day of the memorable attack!

"'And what became of him after this?' inquired I of his brother, already in my own mind anticipating the answer, for there were but few of those who had made themselves the least conspicuous in the like manner who escaped.

"'Why, he was of course arrested,' replied the marquis, 'and thrown into prison, but was discharged on suspicion of madness, although he was no more mad than I am. He remained in Paris without seeking concealment during the hottest period of the *terreur*, and by a most extraordinary chance, was suffered to go unharmed, doubtless protected by the same suspicion of insanity. My father and myself had joined the *armée de Condé*, and would then have been glad of the acquisition of such a bold, brave spirit, to the cause. With the view of his passing the frontier, we succeeded, by dint of the greatest privations, in raising a sum of money which we had conveyed to him. He thanked us sincerely, but said *he could not desert his post nor join us till his task was fulfilled!* With alarm we heard of him again at the execution of the queen, when he made himself remarkable by his conduct at the scaffold. It appears that he threw himself beneath the wheels of the cart in

which that unfortunate princess was transported to her doom, and narrowly escaped being torn to pieces by the infuriated *poissardes* for his loud and outrageous vituperations at their cruelty. He escaped, however, by his extreme good fortune once again, and we were once more appealed to for money to "procure him a passage out of this horrid country," wrote he, "where neither innocence nor beauty could find favour in the sight of men more savage and cruel than the beasts of the field." He refused to tell us in what manner he had disposed of the immense sum we had already, at great risk and inconvenience, sent him for the same purpose. Nevertheless, so great was our anxiety for his safety, and so great the desire that was felt throughout the whole *armée de Condé* for the acquisition of so valuable a member to its ranks, that a subscription was raised among us, poor as we were, and once more was the sum required despatched to this *enfant prodigue*, while we awaited in terror his safe arrival.'

"'The marquis paused in his narrative, and then added, 'And, from that hour to this, I have never beheld him, although he was living, until lately, not far from my own château in Bretagne.'

"'Why, then, came he not to join you?' said I. 'Did he escape from the country?'

"'He did.'

"'And what became of him after this?'

"'He became a MONK!' replied the marquis, 'with the money we had raised at so much toil and pains; he left the country and went to Italy, where he entered a convent of Camuldules; but, after the Restoration, finding the rules of this order not severe enough, he returned to France, and entered the monastery of La Trappe. It is but a few months ago that I received a letter from the superior of the convent, informing me of my brother's death, and mentioning that, although it was against the regulations of the order to admit of the bequeathing of any legacy to the laity, yet, in consideration of the marvellous piety of brother Eugène, he was willing to forward to me, according to his dying wish, the bequest which he had made me. This letter was accompanied by a small sealed packet, which contained about a yard of narrow black ribbon, and a receipt in due form for a sum of money which I instantly remembered was the exact amount despatched in the first instance

to my brother from the *armée de Condé!* The writing was in the hand of *Henri Samson, the executioner*, signed by him, and bearing witness that the money had been received on delivery to the citizen Eugène B—— of the black ribbon which had bound the forehead and held back the hair of the *citoyenne* Capet on the morning of her execution.

"'It was all stained, and stiff with drops of blood. There were a few lines hurriedly written on the back of this paper by the hand of Eugène, wherein he said that he wished not to leave behind him the suspicion that he had disposed in an unworthy manner of the money which we had had so much difficulty in raising, and that he desired that I should become possessor of this relic, and that if possible, it should be preserved in the family from generation to generation. He then merely added that he felt sure, from the knowledge of my sentiments, that I should cast no reproach upon his memory for having spent the sum in the acquisition of this treasure—this memorial of one, who, from having been a martyr upon earth, was now a saint in heaven.'

"'The marquis told me that he had immediately despatched the ribbon to Gratz, deeming that the relic would be most appreciated by the royal lady who sits there in desolate grandeur to mourn the fate of all whom she has loved in this world. He showed me, however, the receipt, which is, perhaps, one of the most extraordinary *pièces justificatives*, which could possibly be produced, and would, I doubt not, readily find a purchaser at a higher price than that for which it was given in acknowledgment.

"'Such was the history of my fellow salver-bearer. After a youth spent in burning vows, in oaths and protestations of what would be his achievements, should he ever be freed from that sombre habit and that slavish tonsure—with a heart beating high with courage, a soul burning for honour and distinction, no sooner had he obtained the freedom for which he had so long sighed, than he hastened to bury all hope, ambition, and liberty beneath the cowl and lowly gabardine of the Trappist. It is evident that his boiling imagination and ardent fancy had been struck with the charms and matchless grace of Marie Antoinette as soon as he had beheld her; he had nursed this passion

through years of sorrow and despair, and, when all was over, had sought this solitude but to dwell undisturbed with the memory of her whom he had loved so long, and with devotion so true and yet so hopeless.

" ' What a pity,' said the prince, with a malicious smile, as he concluded his story, ' that your favourite, Alexandre Dumas, or Eugène Sue, should not have been apprised of the existence of my poor comrade! What a fine five-act melodrama or eight-volumed romance would have been drawn from such materials, could either of them but have procured an hour's interview with him, even through the famous hole in the garden-wall at Meilleraye, by which I am told much knowledge of the interior arrangements of the Trappists gets abroad into the world.'

" M. de Talleyrand never will lose an opportunity of giving a playful *coup de patte* to the *romantiques*, whom, like all the followers of the school of Voltaire, he holds in most especial aversion; and many are the amicable battles which he and I are in the habit of fighting together upon this subject."

" Do you ever meet any of the prince's fellow-

students of Saint Sulpice at the Hôtel Talleyrand ?"

"There is but one who frequents it," replied C.; "for in general it is they who rather shun the recollections which the *ci-devant* Abbé de Perigord must bear with him. *His* intercourse with them has ever been frank and free. As he never played the part of a hypocrite with them, so has he never had to fear detection, or to dread an encounter with those who could tell of his early life.

"There is something touching in the candour and simplicity with which the prince will sometimes converse of Saint Sulpice with the individual to whom I now allude: the only one of his classfellows with whom he has maintained any degree of intimacy, and whom he has bound to himself by ties of the deepest gratitude. He is the Curé of Saint Thomas, one of the most simple-hearted and virtuous of men, and one whom, I think, it would much surprise were he to be told that the Prince de Talleyrand, in spite of his apostasy, had ever been taxed with foul falsehood and black treason, and all the other crimes which have been laid to his charge by the hackneyed writers of the day. In the eyes of the good man (and if ever there was

a saint upon earth, it is he), M. de Talleyrand has never been guilty but of one fault, which he qualifies by naming it a *tort*, when, in a misguided moment, he left the Church for the allurements of the world; but nothing, however, can persuade the worthy curé that the prince would not have returned, had he not been prevented by his marriage. I know nothing more delightful than to listen to the conversation of these two old friends, most particularly when relating to the olden days, and to the *Séminaire*. The prince is really much attached to M. D——; and I remember his being highly incensed upon taking up a volume of some of the modern spurious memoirs, wherein the old curé was mentioned with ridicule, on account of his extreme simplicity. He told me the true story of the good man, which was there related in a garbled form, and which he, who was at Saint Sulpice at the time the adventure occurred, of course remembered well, and told *con gusto*.

"It appears that the good curé, who all his life has been remarkable for his childlike simplicity and credulity, was known at the *Séminaire* by the sobriquet of '*Providence*,' which he had acquired from his readiness to believe in the intervention of

Heaven, whenever the cause was a worthy one, however trifling it might appear, to vain, weak mortals like ourselves. He had risen one cold snowy morning in December, to attend early matins at some church in the neighbourhood, and had dressed himself stealthily and in darkness, fearing to disturb his chum, M. de Sèze, who, worldling as he was, snored on, heedless that it was one of the most solemn festivals in all the year, the feast of St. Nicolas. Meanwhile, the good youth stole shivering down the stairs and through the gloomy streets, clasping his breviary beneath his arm, and repeating all the way most eloquent invocations to Our Lady of the Burning Brand, the patroness of charcoal burners, for a little of that warmth which she bestows so liberally upon her votaries, to enable him even to feel the beads of his rosary as he passed them through his stiffened fingers.

"On arriving at the church-door, he was assailed, or rather waylaid, by a poor woman, an old pensioner of his, who rushed forward and fell at his feet the moment he appeared, declaring that she was a lost creature unless he came to her help; that she had passed the whole night wandering in the streets; that her landlord refused to give her

admittance to her lodging to take away her few paltry rags, unless she paid him what was owing for the rent, which she had no means of doing unless through his bounty. Now it so happened that the young *Séminariste*, never overburdened with the good things of this world, found himself at that peculiar moment entirely *à sec*, and was awaiting his monthly allowance of pocket-money before he could venture to make his appearance among his poor pensioners, so boundless were his charities, so great his nervous dread of being compelled to refuse himself the pleasure of bestowing relief upon the needy—the only pleasure, indeed, which he ever allowed himself to enjoy—the only way in which he suffered himself to expend the scanty pittance which his aged mother could spare from her poor income for procuring, as she imagined, some few luxuries for her son.

"It was in vain, however, that the young abbé endeavoured to assure the poor woman of his utter inability to assist her this once. In vain he endeavoured to shake her off—she clung to his knees—she bathed his feet with her tears—she called on the Lord to bless him, her tender benefactor—she *knew* that he would relieve her—that he would not

have the heart to see her four poor fatherless children turned into the streets to starve. What was a miserable sum of three small crowns (*petits écus*) to such a noble gentleman? Why, he would not miss such a paltry sum at night, were his pocket picked of it before he returned home.

"'But my good woman,' said he, completely overcome by her importunity, 'rich as you think me, I have not at this moment a single *sou* in my possession.'

"'Nay, nay, feel in your pockets, monseigneur; you will surely find enough to save me and my helpless babes from starving. It is not much, my lord bishop (for you will surely become one day a bishop), only three poor crowns!'

"'But on my word, *ma bonne amie*, I have it not—were you to search my pockets through, I tell you again, you would not find a single *sou*.'

"'Ay, that is ever the way,' screamed the woman, clinging to the skirt of his *soutane*, which she held fast in her grasp; 'that is ever the way with rich and noble gentlemen whose pockets are lined with gold and silver—they never have a coin so small as a single *sou*—but search, in Heaven's name, and you will surely find my three poor crowns,

which are all that stand between me and perdition.'

"'Nay, then, if you believe me not—see rather if I tell not truth,' said the poor lad, completely at his wit's end; and, as he said the words, he turned the pockets of his *soutane* inside out—when, what was his surprise (oh, miracle!) out rolled upon the ground three bran new silver small crowns, which seemed to jingle with most heavenly music as they fell at the feet of the poor mendicant, who, with a shriek of joy, gathered them up, and rushed from the church, before the thunderstruck abbé had as yet recovered from the awe and wonder into which the occurrence had thrown him. He remained for some moments riveted to the spot in a sort of beatified trance, unable to imagine it possible that so great a miracle could have been vouchsafed to so unworthy a sinner as himself. Once more he plunged his hands eagerly into the pockets of his *soutane*—but no other coin was forthcoming. Yes—it was evident—Providence had vouchsafed this miracle by way of encouragement to his weak endeavours. He put up an inward prayer for protection against the sin of self-conceit, as the thought overtook him, and, presently recovering himself,

he rushed to the altar of the Virgin, and breathed forth his gratitude at her feet. So great was his emotion, that he resolved at once to spend the whole day in the church, in fasting and in prayer, that no earthly sentiment might mingle with the heavenly feeling thus awakened within him.

"The poor abbé was, indeed, so elevated with the adventure, that he felt neither cold nor hunger, but remained the whole day praying at the different altars; nor did he suffer a morsel to pass his lips until set of sun. He then returned to the *Séminaire* full of humility and gratitude, determined not to tell his adventure to any of his comrades, in dread of their unbelieving mockery. They were, however, all abroad—for was it not the feast of St Nicolas, the gayest holiday in the year, the festival of the patron saint of all the youths and unmarried men in France; when even the poor *Séminaristes* were allowed to spend the evening outside the walls of Saint Sulpice—and they had, of course, all taken advantage of the permission, excepting M. de Sèze, who rushed down the stairs in a perfect fury, as soon as the step of poor 'Providence' was heard; and, without a word of explanation, began to kick and cuff him most unmerci-

fully, loading him with reproaches, until he was forced to pause for want of breath; and then the unhappy object of all this wrath was told that he deserved to be thrown from the window of the seventh story, for having deprived, by his carelessness, an old chum and comrade of his day's holiday, by taking his new *soutane* in the dark, and leaving his old rusty one in its place; and, worse than all, depriving him of the means of diverting his *ennui*, by robbing him of his money, three bran new crowns which he had put aside for this very occasion, and which he would find in the left-hand pocket!

"The miracle was then explained! The poor abbé, crest-fallen and discomfited, slunk away, forced to confess the truth, and his utter inability to make good the sum at that moment. The good-natured M. de Sèze was, however, so diverted at the adventure, that he thought himself amply revenged for the annoyance he had suffered, by the mortification which poor 'Providence' had to endure and the disappointment he expressed at finding that, after all, he had not been made the object of a *miracle*.

"'It is most extraordinary,' said the prince, who

had been telling me this anecdote of M. D——, one day after he had just left us, 'that this adventure did not in any degree lessen his confidence in the interposition of Providence in his affairs, notwithstanding all the mockery and derision of which he had been made the object after this misadventure. On the contrary, he gave himself up with the greatest confidence to the decrees of that Providence which had never deceived him, and which certainly bore him through the most perilous and troublous times without harm or molestation. He never emigrated during the revolution; he remained at his post; and, whether he was deemed too insignificant for annoyance, or whether, in consequence of the great love which was borne him by his parishioners, it was thought prudent to overlook the fact of his remaining in the country, I know not; but it is certain that, without defiance, and yet without servility, he remained, and was unharmed — perhaps the only instance throughout the whole of France.

"'Another specimen of his trust in Providence is worth recording, as it may give you an insight into the state of feeling at the time, and of the enthusiasm which existed, even in remote country

districts, at the period of the breaking up of the old system. After leaving the *Séminaire*, M. D—— was appointed to a small cure in the neighbourhood of Rambouillet, which yielded him not more than about twelve hundred francs per annum. You may readily suppose that, with a knowledge of this fact, I was much surprised to find, on paying him a visit at his *Presbytère*, that throughout the whole country round his name was mentioned with prayers and blessings by the poor: not for his attention to their ghostly comforts, not for his guidance in spiritual matters; but for his munificent charities, his assistance in all their pecuniary difficulties, wherein he always came to their aid, with even more readiness than the inhabitants of the *château* themselves. Meanwhile, as far as his own personal indulgences were concerned, the poorest peasant in his parish lived more sumptuously than he.

" ' I found him in a ruinous old parsonage-house, with scarcely the smallest of the comforts of life; and yet full of the most splendid dreams of all the happiness he meant to confer by his administration in the district to which he had been appointed pastor. There was to be no more misery, no more

want—the golden age was to be revived—in short, his visions were much of the same nature, only partaking of more simplicity, as those of your idol, Fourier. I could not help smiling, as we sat down to our repast of two hard-boiled eggs, and water *à discrétion*, to hear him declare his resolution of enabling his parishioners to have each one, according to the vow of Henri Quatre, a fat fowl to boil for his Sunday dinner.

"'But, my good friend, how will you be enabled to procure for them all these luxuries?'

"Oh, I have hit upon a plan,' replied he, chuckling with glee, 'which is a much better financial scheme, than any ever devised by either Calonne or Necker. So simple too—to be understood by the meanest capacity;' as he spoke, he went to a small cupboard in the wall, and drew from thence a long string of old and dirty playing cards. 'This is my coin,' exclaimed he, triumphantly, waving the greasy mass before my eyes; 'with these simple pieces, which my poor pensioners deliver to the various tradespeople, they can procure in the village, food, fire, and clothing—with these old cards, begged from my evening games of piquet with the old Marquise de Beaugency, I can purchase for

them the comforts, without which they cannot live.'

"'But in the name of Heaven, who will pay the providers?'

"'Oh, I must trust to Providence for that!'

"'I must confess that I left my worthy friend with a mind full of uneasiness, notwithstanding his trust—the more so, when I found, upon inquiry, that he was deeply indebted in every direction for the very provisions which he continued to distribute with such lavish hand. But so great was the respect his name inspired—so great the confidence felt by his flock in his honour and integrity, that no alarm was experienced respecting the payment, it being imagined generally, that he was the agent of some rich and charitable person, for the distribution of these alms, and that they would be paid as soon as he himself received the money. After having given him for his poor what I could spare —a mere drop in the ocean, when viewed with reference to the heaviness of the debts which he had incurred—I took my departure, full of anxiety respecting the future consequences of this thoughtless expenditure on the part of one, whose whole stock of worldly goods would not have satisfied

the demands of even one of his numerous creditors.

"'However, other more serious events coming, meanwhile, to occupy my attention, I lost sight of my old friend, or if ever I *did* think of him, it was with a faint terror, lest, never having heard of him since my visit to Rambouillet, he might have been reported to the bishop of his diocese, and have incurred imprisonment and disgrace for his imprudent practices. The great encounter between the people and their rulers had commenced, and all France was summoned to assist at the first parley, before hostilities began—the assembling of the *états generaux* at Versailles.

"'I arrived at Versailles the day before the procession from the Palace to St. Louis, and was walking arm and arm with Sièyes upon the *tapis vert*, gazing with curiosity on the scene. The day was heavenly, (it sometimes seems to me as though we have no such weather now, as we had then,) the *tapis vert* was crowded—courtiers in their court costume—officers in uniform—the *haut clergé* attired with the brilliant tokens of the rank each held in the Church—were all gathered in groups, either sauntering beneath the shade of the *charmille*

hedge, where the first tender buds of May were just sufficient to screen the promenaders from the rays of the spring-tide sun—or else seated on the stone benches along the alleys, conversing with the ladies, who, all adorned in the gayest colours, and wearing the brightest smiles, seemed bent on rendering the holiday as brilliant as it was possible it could be.

"'On the other side, (the truth *may* be told now without mischief,) avoided by the rest, as though they bore the seeds of pestilence within them, the members of the *tiers état* conversed in busy, whispering knots; no merry laughter was heard from *them*, no pleasant trifling or mirthful jesting was seen lighting up *their* discourse. All was dark and gloomy, care sat on every brow, and that their converse was of weighty matters, was evident, by the tone of mystery in which it was carried on, and the sudden silence which took place among them whenever any stray member of the *noblesse* happened to pass by to join the glittering throng on the other side. Their very costume contrasted strongly with that of their contemptuous superiors; they all wore, and contrary to anticipation, were *proud* to wear the dress to which they had been

condemned—the black hose and surtout, and short black cloak, which, by the antique sumptuary law, denoted the vile, base-born *roturier*.

" ' It was altogether a scene such as I shall never forget while memory has power to act. I never remember in my whole life to have been inspired with so profound a sentiment of melancholy as at that hour. I could scarcely refrain from shedding tears, at perceiving, by what was already taking place, what must of necessity come to pass before long. As we drew near to the palace, the long windows of the suite of apartments looking towards the *Pièce d'Apollon*, and then known as the *Appartements du Dauphin*, were thrown open, and out rushed, like a flight of butterflies, the whole bevy of court beauties, all in high glee, in towering spirits, elated at the prospect of the morrow's pageant, which they evidently looked upon but as a show wherein they were to see much that would amuse, and wherein they should be seen to the very best advantage, as, fortunately, the *Salle des Menus* was lighted from *above*, which was so much more favourable to the effect of rouge and *mouches* than the broad, glaring, side light of the *grande galerie*.

I cannot tell you how the sound of that joyous laughter grated on my ear, as it caused both Sièyes and myself to pause while we watched those light forms, as they playfully chased each other on the terrace among the flowers. The queen was with them there; and I think I see her now, as she stood leaning for support against the pedestal of the statue of Silenus, opposite to the marble staircase, so greatly was she overcome by the fit of laughter into which she had been thrown by some absurd mistake on the part of the Countess de Provence, for her ringing voice and childlike accent reached our ears as we stood close below the balustrade, as she exclaimed, pointing to her sister-in-law, "*Cette chère Sœur* will *never* learn to speak French!" That radiant face and beaming eye could not at such a moment be seen without exciting a feeling of *pity*, and this I know was shared by Sièyes, for, without uttering a word, he pressed my arm significantly, and led me from the spot towards a group of the *tiers-état* who were standing at the entrance of the *bosquets*. As we drew near, I descried the Abbé Maury, who was, as usual, declaiming with all his might, although in a low tone, to an eager crowd of listeners. Just as we came up, he con-

cluded some section of his discourse with this question, 'Eh bien, Messieurs, if the noblesse treat us so, what are we to do?'

"'*Why, trust to Providence!*' was the answer, from one of those standing near. The voice made me start, so little was I prepared to hear it in such a place. I turned to the speaker—it was indeed my own dear D——!

"'Of course my inquiries and his replies followed each other in rapid succession, and I was almost led to believe that his philosophy was the best that had ever been devised, when he informed me that he had come to Versailles as representative of the clergy, deputed by his *commune*, the electors being of course in this, as in every other case, compelled to disburden him of his debts before he could leave the canton. 'It was quite unexpected,' said the good man, 'almost a miracle; for how could I dream even a short month ago of deputies, and notables, and gatherings at Versailles. You see I was right in trusting to Heaven for relief. However, it *did* astonish the worthy *bourgeois* a little, when they discovered how dearly they would have to pay for their choice; and they might perhaps have cancelled it had such a proceeding been

allowed. *Mais, c'est égal!*—summer is coming on, harvest time will soon draw near, and the poor of my parish have, meanwhile, been clothed and fed!'

"'It would perhaps be difficult to meet with a more beautiful realization of the spirit of Scripture than is to be found in this anecdote. He has met with his reward, for "*mes pauvres*," as he always called his little flock, protected him through the dangers and persecutions which he subsequently had to undergo; and, at the Restoration, he was appointed to the cure of St. Thomas, one of the best *bénéfices* of Paris, which he still holds, and where, until these very few years, when, from old age, he has become incapacitated for preaching, he was wont to deliver many and many a pithy sermon upon the wonderful "bounty of Providence."'

"There is scarcely a visitor at the Hotel Talleyrand," resumed C., "who does not, as in the case of the *curé* of St. Thomas, elicit some quaint history, some *piquant* anecdote of days gone by, on the part of the prince. His memory is so wonderful, that he can scarcely relate the simplest trait of his own life without being led into many other stories illustrative of the times in which the incidents happened, and to which he knows better than

any living being how to give a charm, an interest, which will sometimes render the smallest circumstance of value, and which is a gift so highly esteemed by our nation, that *l'art de raconter* has ever been placed far above any other accomplishment in the qualifications requisite to form an agreeable member of society. You will in general find the prince *indulgent* when relating anecdotes even of persons from whom it may be a well-known fact that he has differed all his life. I have often heard him say that 'experience teaches us indulgence,' and that 'the wisest man is he who doubts his own judgment with regard to the motives which actuate his fellow-men.' I have sometimes heard him entertain his intimate circle, during a long evening, with a vast number of amusing traits and anecdotes relating to his 'fellow-labourers in the vineyard,' without once having recourse to scandal or ridicule; which I consider the very perfection of the story-teller's science. The only person with whose name he likes, even now, sometimes, to disport himself in his *moments de malice* is Madame Necker, whom he never could tolerate, and with whom, even in her most palmy days, he scrupled not to declare himself openly at war. He really *felt* with regard

to her what he so happily expressed, 'She has every virtue and but one fault, and that is, she is insupportable!' The good lady never forgave his comparing her to a 'frigate riding at anchor, and receiving a salute from a friendly power,' when she stood upon her own hearth-rug at the Hôtel Necker, upon the occasion of her weekly receptions; her ample proportions obscuring the light of the fire, as, with pinched-up features and prudish smile, she listened to the compliments of the Academicians, whom she assembled but for this purpose. The 'strait-laced Genevese,' as he calls her, has furnished him, I verily believe, with more witty *bon mots*, with more stinging epigrams, than even his most bitter enemy.

"His feeling towards her daughter, Madame de Staël, has much of the same nature. To this hour, his *amour-propre* is wounded by the obligation he owes her for having obtained, through her credit with Barras, his recall from exile, and thus, in reality, laid the foundation of his fortune. This unwillingness to own a debt may savour somewhat of ingratitude; but the prince will be excused when it is remembered that Madame de Staël possessed, in common with all persons of a nervous, irritable

temperament, an excess of that susceptibility which phrenologists have denominated 'approbativeness,' which made her over-value her success, and never cease bringing it to the memory of the person obliged. This, to a proud, sarcastic temper like that of the prince, must have been peculiarly annoying, the more so as Napoleon, with the gross, soldier-like want of tact which he would sometimes display, loved to remind him both of the immensity of the service, and by whom it had been rendered, and then would laugh coarsely to see him wince under the reproach, which all his wonted philosophy did not enable him to bear with calmness.

"He had never the same high opinion of Madame de Staël which the world professed. He thought her style pedantic and *guindé*, and would complain, when any of her compositions were read to him, of their total want of nature and *coloris*. I have often heard him say, that those who read the writings might fairly boast of knowing the writer, for that nothing could more resemble Madame de Staël herself than the false, exaggerated sentiments and superficial erudition of her compositions. I have seldom seen him enjoy more keenly a story than

the one he will sometimes tell of an adventure which befel Madame de Staël at a party where he himself was present. I think it was at a *fête champêtre* given by Madame Helvetius at her pretty little château at Auteuil. The garden was full of all the talent of Europe and America combined, for it was just at the height of the American mania, and the fête, indeed, was given to the great champion of liberty, the regenerator of his race—*l'homme de la nature*—the immortal Franklin. I could tell you, by the bye, some curious circumstances connected with the great patriot, which you, as an Englishman, would be glad to hear, and which I am sure the prince would be equally glad to communicate, for he has but small esteem for the *faux bonhomme*, as he called him.

"Madame Helvetius was one of the most charming women that the world ever produced. The style and type of such beings seem lost ever since the revolution. Without being strictly handsome, she always succeeded, without effort, in obtaining more admiration than the professed beauties who might be in the same company with her. There was a charm, a grace in every action, in every word she uttered, which has never been surpassed.

Although she herself possessed no literary talent, there was not a celebrity in Europe who was not proud of her notice; and her assemblies in Paris, and her fêtes at Auteuil are not forgotten to this day. Upon the occasion to which I refer, Madame de Staël was making her *début* in the Parisian literary world, and calculating upon even more success than she obtained, although, had she been a person of moderate pretensions, she would have been more than satisfied. She had just arrived in Paris; she herself and all those connected with her, had been bright particular stars in the somewhat dim and cloudy horizon of Geneva.

"On her first appearance at the réunion, Madame Helvetius had, of course, with well-bred courtesy, paid her most particular attention, but having other guests to welcome, had left her after a while, to superintend the distribution of the amusements about the grounds. Once or twice she had passed Madame de Staël sitting gloomily on the bench where she had left her, and at last sent M. de Talleyrand to keep her company; but M. de Talleyrand had tact enough to know that, being himself no literary lion, he was no company for Madame de Staël, and so immediately went in quest of society more congenial to her taste. He

soon returned, in company with the Abbé Monti, whose poems were at that time the rage all over Europe, and whose coming put the fair authoress into the best of humours. M. de Talleyrand sate down on the bench beside them, in silence, feeling himself quite extinguished by so much talent, and remained a passive listener, anxious for improvement. The conversation was overwhelming with erudition, and then the compliments were poured forth like rain from an April sky,—the Abbé 'had never reckoned upon so great an honour as that of meeting the first writer of the age;' madame 'little dreamed when she arose that morning, that the day would be marked by so auspicious an event as the meeting with the Abbé.'

"'I have devoured every word that has escaped from Sappho's pen,' said the abbé.

"'I cannot sleep until I read the charming odes from the Italian "Tyrtæus,"' said the lady.

"'Have you seen my last endeavour?' said the abbé.

"'Alas! not yet,' sighed the lady, 'although report speaks of it more highly than of any which have preceded it.'

"'I have it here!' exclaimed the abbé, eagerly

drawing a small volume from his pocket. 'Allow me to present it to you, madame; a poor homage, indeed, to so much genius, but it may prove interesting to one who has had so much success in heroic poetry.'

"'Thanks, thanks,' cried Madame de Staël, seizing the little volume with every demonstration of overpowering gratitude. "This is indeed a treasure, and will be prized by me far beyond gold or jewels.'

"She turned over the leaves slowly, while the delighted abbé watched her with a charming self-complacency—then suddenly dropping it into her lap, she exclaimed, turning on the abbé a languid glance, 'You were talking of heroic poetry, dear abbé; have you seen my last attempt—a dramatic scene, "l'Exilé"—a slight and poor imitation of some of your own?'

"'I have not been so blessed as to obtain a copy,' replied the abbé.

"'How fortunate that I should have one in my reticule!' said madame, hurriedly seizing the strings of the bag suspended from her arm, and drawing forth a thin volume in boards. The abbé bent low over it as she presented it, and kissing it

with reverence, placed it by his side, and the conversation—that is to say, the complimenting—was continued with redoubled vigour.

"M. de Talleyrand then departed, and did not return till the company broke up, when he found that they had both left the bench whereon they had been seated so long together, leaving, however, the 'precious treasures,' which they had received from each other with so much gratitude, behind them! M. de Talleyrand seized upon them with inexpressible delight, thinking that they would furnish matter for innocent *persiflage*, when the loss came to be remembered by either party. But the thing was complete—*they were never sought and never asked for*, and he has them now in his library, and loves to show them as he tells the story of their coming into his possession.

"It is in this manner," said C., as he pulled out his watch, surprised at the lateness of the hour, "that M. de Talleyrand will sometimes entertain us with familiar histories of many whom the world has set upon pedestals of its own erecting, and from which he is fain to bring them down, although without scorn or malice, in order that we may see them more closely and know them better. You

will now understand the reason why it must be so difficult to write a good 'Life of Prince Talleyrand;' there would be so little of himself, compared to what must be told of other people—the work would be so full of digressions, that it would become as bulky as a cyclopædia. Besides, a single person could not do the whole. It would require writers of different talent, of different character, of different nations—I was almost going to say of different ages—to do justice to the varied scenes wherein he himself displayed such variety of talents."

"Then why do you not, my dear friend, seize upon the branch which you have at your own disposal, and give the world the *Vie Anecdotique* of the prince?" said I. "Supposing you were to begin and try your skill by relating to me by way of practice before you publish?"

"Well, well, the idea is not a bad one," said C., laughing heartily; "it is certainly not the *matériel* that would be wanting, and when we have time and solitude it may amuse us both. *One* talent at least is secure, for you are undoubtedly a capital listener."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COUNTESS DE LA MOTTE, OF NECKLACE NOTORIETY.

It will easily be believed that I did not lose sight of the promise which my friend had made with so much *bonhomie*, and the very first time I found myself alone with him, I did not forget to claim it. The opportunity occurred soon after the conversation I have just recorded. We were pacing together the long picture-gallery of the château; the rain was beating in torrents against the Gothic casements, and all hopes of going abroad had been abandoned. The prince had not left his chamber that morning. He was busily engaged, and had announced his intention of remaining *invisible* until dinner. He was occupied "*à faire son Courier*," as he called it, upon which occasion I

have known him sign and send off an entire bag full of letters, not one of which was despatched without having first been carefully perused and corrected by himself. The facility and precision with which he could always find the exact word which was needed, and which his secretaries would, perhaps, have been seeking for some time in vain, was matter of the greatest admiration to all who witnessed it; but he could neither write nor dictate with ease; the most trifling *petit billet* which, when completed, appeared the very model of graceful *laiser-aller* and badinage, often gave him as much trouble to indite as one of his most complicated despatches.

This, I think, may be attributable to the neglect of his early education. Subsequent study and careful reading may impart taste and erudition, but can rarely give facility. C. told me that he has known the prince remain for more than a week upon the composition of a letter of condolence or congratulation, if it chanced to be addressed to a brother wit, or one of whose criticism he might happen to stand in awe. In these cases, he would cause his secretary to write two or three letters, in different styles, upon the subject he had at heart,

and would then compile from the number, one in his own writing, with his own piquant additions and improvements, which was soon bandied from hand to hand, and quoted in every *salon* as a *chef-d'œuvre* of wit and epigram. Those who were in the secret would smile at the unbounded praise bestowed by the journals upon the composition of his despatches (some of which are really master-pieces), and the wording of his protocols; for they well knew that they would scarcely have attracted a single moment's notice had the truth been known.

"Does he give much time to the writing of his memoirs?" asked I of C., as he was pacing thoughtfully the polished oaken boards of the gallery, in which the double line of pictures, which garnish the walls on either side, is reflected as in a mirror, so that at each step we seemed to tread upon the semblance of some great king or warrior; for, with a tacit self-homage, the prince had furnished the gallery with the portraits of the sovereigns and great men of all countries, with whom he had come in contact.

"I think his memoirs were concluded some years ago," replied C., in answer to my question, "and

that they have been deposited in safety, out of the pale of his own country, *comme de raison*, where they will remain until the time fixed by himself for their publication shall have expired. Many competent judges are of opinion that, even at that distant period, the interest of their promulgation to the world will be but little diminished. There is yet so much mystery, so much which has been withheld from public scrutiny, in all the great political changes which have taken place, that there will be as much novelty in the plain, straightforward narrative of the causes which led to their occurrence, as though they were events of yesterday. From the very first years of the reign of Louis Seize, when the tone and manners of society yet smacked of the wild and dissolute freedom of the Regency, to the restraint and affectation of the Restoration, has M. de Talleyrand always borne a part in public affairs. Always floating on the tide of circumstance, he has kept himself in full view of the wondering crowd of beholders, while many of those who had set forth with better chances of success, by opposing the current, have been overwhelmed by its resistless rush.

"There cannot exist a greater proof of his

cleverness and good taste, than his steady avoidance of anything like public condemnation. He has been *accused* of every crime of which humanity can be guilty, according to the caprice or fury of his enemies, but not even a misdemeanour has ever been *proved* against him. Even so long ago as when he was as yet, according to his own expression, '*un assez mince particulier*,' long before the revolution, he had tact and sense enough to steer clear of intrigue, and to avoid the society of those who were suspected of dabbling in obscure political manœuvre. Indeed, had he not been wise beyond his years, he could not have escaped intimacy with the Prince-Cardinal, Louis de Rohan, he who has become famous in history for his credulity in the affair of the diamond necklace, and who, fool as he was, has yet been by many historians quoted as the origin, the first great cause, of the Revolution. This prelate, who at the time when M. de Talleyrand was a simple abbé, waiting for preferment, was already at the very acmé of dignity and power, spared no pains to conciliate the young ecclesiastic. But the Abbé de Perigord was already possessed of too much discernment not to be fully aware that these advances were less owing to any merit of his

own, than to the circumstance of his mother being at the time *Dame du Palais* to Marie-Antoinette, whose good graces it had become a kind of monomania with the unfortunate cardinal to gain. The prince, to this very day, however, blesses the good fortune which sent him from Paris upon business connected with his office as *Agent du Clergé*, just at the very moment when the poor befooled cardinal, and his wily accomplice, were in the very thickest of their plot; so that his name was never mentioned throughout the whole course of the proceedings, neither as frequenter of the cardinal's hôtel, nor even as an acquaintance of his."

"Did he ever chance to meet with Madame de la Motte?"

"But once, and that was on the very occasion of his going to take leave of the cardinal, before he left Paris. He had been invited to sup with his Eminence, *en petit comité*, and had come prepared to undergo long and *ennuyeux* discourses upon the various duties of his new office—the necessity of vigilance in detecting fraud—of conciliation to prevent discord; in short, he almost dreaded the interview, fully anticipating the *mauvais quart d'heure* which is usually spent by a

young, inexperienced priest, when delivered up defenceless to the torrent of recommendations and warning, of advice and moral instances, which invariably fall to his share when alone with his superior. Great, therefore, was the astonishment of the Abbé de Perigord, when, in spite of the terms in which the invitation had been couched in the cardinal's own hand-writing—'*Venez souper tête-à-tête avec moi*'—to find the apartment into which he was ushered blazing with light, and signs of ceremony and festivity evident in all the arrangements which had been made for his reception.

"'I found,' said the prince, in whose words I will tell you the history of this adventure, 'on entering the *petit salon*, which was already lighted with perfumed tapers, and redolent of the fragrant essences which the cardinal loved so much, seated by the blazing fire, which was, according to the custom of the Hôtel-Cardinal, composed of scented woods, a lady, whom I instantly recognised as the Princesse de Guéménée, ex-governess to the royal children, but who had some time before been compelled to resign office, in consequence of the disgraceful bankruptcy of her husband, which had not a little contributed to lower the *noblesse* in the eyes of the people, and

formed one of the most astounding events by which that turbulent era was marked. The princess was alone; which circumstance rather astonished me, for I had come prepared with an apology for being late, and I wondered at the absence of the cardinal, as it was already considerably past the time at which he had requested me to be present. The princess herself seemed annoyed as I entered. She had evidently been waiting for some time, for she was in no very pleasant humour, and scarcely deigned to return a civil acknowledgment to my humble salutations and inquiries. However, I was easily consoled for any mortification I might have experienced at this apparent indifference, for the poor princess had but few ideas to dispense, and I therefore considered that it might be as a matter of prudence that she hesitated about wasting them on so humble an individual as myself.

"'Upon this occasion, I was contented with warming my hands at the scented blaze, and gazing on the portly form of the princess, reclining in ample majesty on the green satin fauteuil before me. Perhaps there never existed a type of ridicule and exaggeration more strongly defined than the Princesse de Guéménée, particularly at this period

of her life, when, having lost, by extravagance and folly, the position to which she was entitled by birth and fortune, she appeared as though seeking to gain distinction in another way, by exaggerating the follies of the times, and affording in her person a complete epitome of all the extravagance and bad taste for which the court had become, even then, proverbial. At the very hour of which I am speaking, even when under the ban of dismissal from the court, of reproval from the sovereign, and of the condemnation of all persons of credit and character throughout the kingdom—when it was a notorious fact that her husband and herself were paying loans upon the estates which yet remained to them at the rate of fifty and seventy per cent.—was she attired in all the absurd and costly frippery which a depraved fashion might have excused some years before, when she was yet in possession of the stupendous fortune which so long had caused the Rohans to rival in splendour the sovereign himself, but which would only excite pity and disgust in the minds of those aware of the desperate state of her affairs.

"'She was attired in a robe of I know not what kind of rich stuff, which stood on end, and com-

pletely filled the immense arm-chair in which she was seated. This again was entirely covered with the richest lace, which, looped with ornaments in brilliants, representing *scorpions*, fell over either elbow of the chair, completely disguising its form, thus leaving the princess to represent to the beholder the richly-decorated joss of some Chinese temple, that scorns, in virtue of its divinity, the support which mortals need when seated. Altogether I scarcely ever remember to have seen a more ridiculous figure than that of the Princesse de Guéménée as she sat thus before me, the light of the fire dancing upon the diamonds with which she was covered from head to foot, now resting upon the thick rouge upon her cheeks, then flying off to some absurd and comical ornament with which she had thought fit to load the towering fabric of her powdered hair, and making her countenance take all kinds of fantastic expressions, as though she had been the sport of some merry demon.

"'I endeavoured, as in duty bound, to divert the *ennui* under which the princess was labouring, by trying to recount some of the latest news of the court. I had just returned from Versailles, where I had spent the day bidding

adieu to my friends, and thought that it might be agreeable to her to hear the newest gossip. But I could gain no attention. She suffered me to talk on until I was weary, and I could see that she was not paying the slightest heed to my endeavours to amuse her. Suddenly, and in the midst of one of my most diverting anecdotes, she roused herself by a strong effort from the fit of abstraction into which she had been plunged, and turned sharply round towards me.

"'You say you have just returned from Versailles?'

"'As I have had the honour to tell you, princess.'

"'Did you hear of my nephew being at court, to-day?'

"'Indeed I did not hear the cardinal's name pronounced during the whole day, although I did not leave until the latest hour of admission.'

"'*Mon Dieu!*' exclaimed the princess, in a tone of the deepest emotion, 'then he has gone thither *en secret avec cette intrigante!*'

"'These were her very words, and, just as she had pronounced them, the rattle of carriage-wheels was heard in the court-yard of the Hôtel Cardinal,

and presently a great noise and bustle were heard upon the staircase, with loud laughter in a female voice, which seemed to give a sort of nervous spasm to the poor Princesse de Guéménée, for she opened and shut the huge fan which she carried, with a loud, impatient jerk, each time that the echo of that excited laughter reached the little *salon* where we were seated. At length, the door opened, and the cardinal entered, leading by the hand, or rather, as was the fashion of the time, by the tips of the fingers, a lady whom he introduced to the princess as the Comtesse de Valois de la Motte. The name excited my curiosity, for I had heard her story but a short time before from the lips of my mother, and had been much moved by her misfortunes. I looked at the lady with the greatest interest, and with a predetermination to discover traces of her royal descent in her person and demeanour. I was moreover wounded by the coldness of the manner of the princess towards her. I thought her conduct uncivil and inhospitable in the extreme. She never rose from her chair on the introduction taking place, but had preserved the same idol-like rigidity of posture, neither did she even condescend to return a smile

in acknowledgment of all the sweet things with which the Comtesse de la Motte ceased not to overwhelm her from the first moment of her entrance—assuring her that she had been longing for this meeting for some time past—that there was no one in the world whose acquaintance she had so much desired to make as that of the Princesse de Guéménée—in short, all the common-place flatteries with which little people are in the habit of soothing and allaying the adverse tempers of the great.

"'It is a singular fact (and I do assure you the notion has not been forced upon my imagination by subsequent events), but I was struck with the extreme vulgarity of the tone of her address to the princess, even in the few moments which preceded our summons to the supper-table; and I had already a certain misgiving about the character of the lady from this circumstance alone. But I reserved my definitive judgment of her until we were ushered into the supper-room, for the *petit salon* was lighted with lamps of alabaster, and the light, thus beautifully softened to the eye, was rendered too dim to enable one to distinguish the play of the features, the changes of expression, all the little tokens of character which are exhibited in the countenance

when under the influence of any one predominant passion. I waited then, with patience, until we were comfortably seated at supper. By good fortune, my place was opposite to the comtesse, and I was thus enabled to contemplate her to my heart's content. It was fortunate, too, that she scarcely deigned to notice my presence, so absorbed was she in her endeavours to win a smile from the princess. I was thus rendered a mere spectator of a scene, which time and the subsequent events that took place have rendered worthy of being registered among my own most interesting *souvenirs*.

"'As to the cardinal, when once he had apologized to me for his late return to the hôtel, and excused himself upon the plea of having been detained at Versailles upon business connected with the affairs of Madame la Comtesse, he scarcely seemed to remember that I was in existence, so entirely engrossed was he with the efforts he was compelled to make, in order to excite the princess to conversation on the one hand, and to restrain the volubility of the Comtesse de la Motte on the other. The contrast between the two female guests of the cardinal was,

indeed, striking, and one was led to wonder at seeing them together at the same table.

"'You have already heard the description of Madame de Guéménée: now, Madame de la Motte was, in all points of outward appearance and manner, exactly the reverse of that mighty dame. She was a small, lively person, full of fire, and talking with a strong accent and active gesticulation. She was, without doubt, what, in the world, is called a pretty woman, for she had a fine complexion, with sparkling black eyes, and a superb range of ivory teeth, which she took every pains to display, by an incessant twist of her lips, which I remember to this day, as having produced the most unpleasant effect possible upon my nerves. She had a remarkable profusion of really fine chesnut hair, which was but half-powdered, and clustered in most bewitching ringlets round her face. Her age might have been about seven or eight-and-twenty—the very age most to be dreaded in woman; the mind, possessing all the experience of maturity—the person yet retaining all the bloom and charm of youth. Her attire was well chosen to set off her complexion, but it shocked my taste to witness the profusion of ornament and jewels with which she

was adorned, even while speaking of herself as a *pauvre solliciteuse*, to whom a miserly government would only accord a beggarly pension of eight hundred livres. Her diamonds, indeed, rivalled both in beauty and profusion those of the Princesse de Guéménée herself, and her dress consisted of a robe of orange-coloured *brocatelle*, shot with black, and flowered with gold. Her hands and arms were hidden by long gloves of Spanish kid, and I could readily imagine that there was coquetry in this precaution, as the hardships in which her early years had been spent, must, of necessity, have left their traces *there*.

"'I remember being struck with the reflection which forced itself upon me at the time, and being lost in admiration as I gazed upon the Comtesse de la Motte, at the extreme ease and facility with which she had acquired the jargon and petty graces of high society. Her manners certainly gave the lie direct to the old prejudice, that it requires many years of apprenticeship to become an adept in the fashionable art. Neither did she betray at first, by any one triviality or vulgarity of expression or pronunciation, that she had not all her life been accustomed to the society in which she then found

herself. The only peculiarity which might have excited suspicion in *very* particular persons, was the hurry and agitation in which she seemed to exist—a perpetual restlessness—an over-desire to excite interest and to produce effect. Mind you, I am speaking of the first hour or so, while yet she was uncertain as to the opinion which the princess might have formed of her. But after this restraint had a little worn off, and she had grown a little less guarded in her conversation, I began to perceive many incongruities in her behaviour. The effect was most extraordinary—she appeared, at one and the same moment, two distinct characters; her very voice altered, sometimes before she had concluded her sentence.

"'I must do the Princesse de Guéménée the justice to declare that, throughout the whole evening, her conduct was perfect. She listened in silence, but without any evidence of ill-humour or contempt, to all the *agaceries* and lively sallies with which the comtesse sought so earnestly to divert her. She even condescended, now and then, to applaud, but without favour, and from a distance, as she would have done from her box at the Opera to the successful efforts of the actress whose talent might

for a moment have succeeded in charming her into this demonstration of approval. But it was when, at the solicitation of the cardinal, excited with the wine, of which she had partaken unsparingly, and elevated by the hope of winning the good graces of the company, Madame de la Motte launched forth into the eternal history of her "*infortunes*," which had been her great *moyen de succès* with the numberless dupes she had made, that to me all delusion ceased at once. The imposture was easy to discover beneath the envelope of affected high breeding with which she had at first concealed her determination of charming the princess, and the *aventurière* stood revealed without disguise.

"'I know that you will suspect my judgment of being influenced by the conclusion of her story; but I do assure you that even then I could not help wondering that his Eminence should have admitted to his intimacy a person like Madame de la Motte. It has since become matter of surprise to all the world, that the cardinal, credulous and simple as it had pleased Heaven to make him, could ever have been so beguiled as to give the slightest degree of credit to her representations;

but as for me, after having passed that single evening in her company, I almost feel inclined to believe in witchcraft. There *must* have been some evil power at work, when the Cardinal de Rohan was delivered up to the possession (no other word can express this infatuation) of the Comtesse de Valois de la Motte!'

"'How I should have liked to be present!' said I, 'and to hear from her own lips the recital of her adventures!'

"'Bah!' said the prince, laughing, 'I can tell you the tale, and if it prove as interesting to you as it did to me, you will not forget it more than I have done. I believe it to be strictly true in all its main points. It is a singular story, and but little known. She told it well, too, and I leave you to judge of the effect which it must have produced at the time.

"'She said that her father, who, there can be no doubt was, in reality, the Count de Saint Remy de Valois, descended from Henry II., had sold the whole of his estates to a rich *fermier-général*, in order to satisfy the debts incurred by the inordinate love of splendour and expense in which his wife had indulged since their marriage. The

family was, in consequence, reduced to the very lowest ebb of destitution and poverty. The mother, who was the daughter of one of the Count de Saint Remy's vassals, had not strength of mind to bear the poverty which her own extravagance had brought upon her family, and fled, leaving her husband and three children to endure the privations which she was so ill-disposed to share. There was an old Gothic ruin in the park, belonging to what had once been the château of the Counts de Saint Remy, and this the *fermier-général* consented to give up to the count and his young family. Hither, then, did the hapless little band retire, with no hope but in Heaven. The count became a confirmed misanthrope, and never stirred from the old ruin from the moment that he had fixed his abode within it. He suffered his hair and beard to grow, and refused to hold communication with any living being, save with his young children. But he took little heed of their welfare, notwithstanding his affection for them, nor seemed to care whether they were provided with bread or left to starve; and, had it not been for the kindness of the peasants of the neighbourhood, who, with native delicacy and good feeling, fearing to wound his

pride, would come in secret and at night to deposit provisions upon the threshold of the mouldering edifice wherein they had taken refuge, the whole family would sometimes have been for days together without a morsel of food.

"'This, however, was far from being sufficient to satisfy their wants, and the care of providing food devolved, of course, upon the eldest child Jeanne (Madame de la Motte herself). She would wander along the public road from sunrise to sunset, holding her little brother by the hand, and carrying her sister, yet a helpless infant, on her back, and thus the little trio, faint and weary, and covered with sordid rags, would run by the side of every carriage that passed on the highway, calling out in a piteous tone, "Charity, charity, for the love of God! A morsel of bread for three poor starving orphans, descended from the royal blood of the Valois!" This appeal failed not, of course, to attract notice.

"'I was fair, and pretty,' said the comtesse, as she told the tale, 'and sometimes returned laden with silver, which I hastened to convert into necessaries for our use, and comforts for my father, ere I sought my home at night. This state of things

lasted for more than two years. The old ruin had fallen into greater decay; the count had fallen into a state of greater gloom and apathy, scarcely ever uttering a syllable to the children, nor seeming to take the least notice of their departure or return, nor of their efforts to procure for themselves and him the nourishment which was needful to sustain existence.

"'One evening, poor Jeanne returned with her little companions, weary and footsore, to the old tower. They had been out a longer time than usual, the day had been wild and stormy, and but few travellers had passed the road, so that but small profit had been made, and there was a prospect of a supper even more scanty than usual. On entering the tower, they were struck by the unwonted silence and darkness of the place, for the count generally took upon himself the charge of feeding the fire, and at nightfall lighted a torch to read over and over again, for the millionth time, the genealogy of his family, and the title-deeds proving his descent from the Valois, the only occupation in which he now seemed to find amusement or consolation.

"'Upon this occasion, however, all was dark.

and silent as the grave, and Jeanne, after having called her father without receiving any answer, drew near to the hearth, and blew up the few remaining embers into a sickly blaze, which just sufficed to light the interior of the tower. Her father was seated, drooping and motionless, in his customary seat in the chimney corner, leaning against the wall, with his head bent low upon his bosom, and his hand upon his heart.

"'He is asleep,' said Jeanne, to the little ones; 'let us make no noise, but hurry to bed as quickly as possible, that he may not be disturbed.'

"'So she gave each of the children a morsel of bread and a piece of the curd-cheese eaten by the poor peasants in that part of the country, and they all three sought in haste and silence the bundle of straw allotted to their use. Here they slept soundly until the dawn. Jeanne was the first to wake, and, on perceiving the sunbeams struggling through the loop-hole in the wall, rose with the hope of having better luck than on the preceding day, and hurriedly gathered on her rags, determined to set forth at once upon her daily errand. She was just preparing to rouse her little brother, when she was struck with terror, on turning to bid adieu to her

father, to perceive that he was still seated in the chimney-nook, in the same attitude in which she had found him on returning to the tower on the evening before. He had passed the whole night seated thus without moving; his head still drooping on his bosom—his hand still pressed upon his heart! There was something so unnatural in this immobility, that the child, young as she was, felt overcome with dread. She approached the count and listened, but she heard not his breathing, nothing but the beating of her own heart. She laid her hand upon his shoulder, and pushed him gently.

"'Father, it is time to rise!' said she, in a low voice, and then the loud shriek, which burst from her lips, echoed through the tower, and roused from their slumber the two babes, who ran crying towards her.

"'The body of her father had yielded to her touch, and had sunk forward into the fire-place, where it lay upon the hearth, among the cold ashes. It was evident that he had been dead for many hours, and, in her fright, poor Jeanne, scarcely knowing what to do, seized the little Marguerite in her arms, and ran screaming from the tower, nor

paused until she reached the town, where instantly, with a prudence and foresight beyond her years, she went to seek the curé. Great was the excitement among the peasantry on the estate when they heard of the death of the Count de St. Remy, and they assembled in great numbers around the old tower, and bore away the body to the chapel of the château. But the hard-hearted *fermier-général*, well aware that his possession of the estate was illegal—for the count had not the power to dispose of the land, which belonged of right to his children after him—refused to receive the corpse, and it remained for two whole days outside the chapel-door, whence it was carried to the burying-ground of the village, where it was thrown without ceremony, still covered with the rags in which he had died, into the common fosse,—the curé having refused the prayers of the church to one who had died without its aid, consequently in a state of *impénitence finale*.

"'After the death of her father, Jeanne, still, as usual, accompanied by her little brother, and carrying her sister on her back, set off on foot for Paris, with the papers which proved her descent from Henry II., and which constituted her whole

worldly store, all soiled and ragged, sown up in her tattered *casaquin*. In this plight did she traverse the whole of France, a distance of nearly two hundred leagues, with no support by the way, but from the charity of travellers, until she arrived at the last stage of her journey, within one league of the capital. She declared that, on that memorable day, she had walked more than twenty miles, with the determination of arriving at Paris before nightfall; but here, just at the very moment of seeing her hopes realized, she sank exhausted by the roadside, unable to move a step farther. Her feet were torn and bleeding, and she was drenched to the skin; the rain, which had fallen in torrents during the whole afternoon, had rendered the roads so slippery, that her fatigue had been doubled; added to which, she had scarcely tasted food since morning, for she discovered that, as she drew nearer to the capital, travellers were possessed of sterner feelings; they either turned a deaf ear to her petition, or else laughed to scorn the terms in which it was couched.

"'Night was coming on apace; it was impossible to remain till morning on the wet and muddy bank. Her heart was pierced by the wailings of her little sister, and the cries of her brother for food and

warmth were most piteous. Once more did she call her courage to her aid, and essayed to walk, but she was too weak, and, staggering forward a few paces, fell with her head against a door in the wall, which ran along the footpath. The shock burst it open, and discovered to the astonished gaze of the poor famished children, a scene which appeared to them like fairy-land—a garden filled with blooming shrubs and flowers, and lighted by myriads of coloured lamps. There was no one walking in the garden—the ground was too wet for that—but a few paces from the gate stood a Chinese pavilion, raised by a flight of steps from the ground, all decorated with party-coloured streamers, and blazing with light, within which was gathered a crowd of magnificently-attired ladies and cavaliers, and whence issued sounds of mirth and laughter, and strains of low soft music. It was like a dream of heaven! Jeanne never could tell who among this gay company was the first to perceive the three little miserable wanderers as they stood shivering at the gate, for she stood entranced, until she was brought back to reality by a loud voice shouting a coarse reprimand to a servant in rich livery, who was standing at the door of the pavilion, for having

left the garden-gate unlocked. Presently the servant in rich livery came hurriedly down the steps, and taking Jeanne by the arm, was proceeding to turn her without ceremony into the road, when a sudden instinct caused her to resist the attack, and springing forward with a desperate effort, with outstretched arms, she darted towards the pavilion, and called out in a piteous voice, in which the two younger children joined, as soon as ever they heard the first note, so familiar was the cry—"Charity—charity, for the love of Heaven! A morsel of bread for three poor starving orphans, *descendants of the royal house of Valois!*"

"'In an instant the whole company rushed to the balcony which surrounded the pavilion, attracted by the piercing shriek of Jeanne and the novelty of the appeal. She had sunk upon her knees at the foot of the balustrade, awaiting in silence the success of her bold attack. For a moment it was doubtful, for the lacquey in rich livery had again got fast hold of the child's arm, and in obedience to the same rough command which had sentenced her to a dismissal before, was about to push her again towards the gate, when suddenly a lady, one of the most richly attired among the com-

pany, calling to him in an authoritative tone to desist, and forcing her way through the crowd, came down the steps to where poor Jeanne was still kneeling, pale and trembling, with her little brother clinging to her skirts, and the baby-sister wailing piteously at her back. The garden where this scene took place belonged to the magnificent château of M. le Marquis de Boulainvilliers, at Passy; the gentleman who had commanded the lacquey to turn the children from the gate was M. de Boulainvilliers himself, and consequently the lady who had desired him do so at his peril, could be no other than Madame la Marquise de Boulainvilliers!

"'The fates had been kind indeed, when they led poor Jeanne into the friendly domain of the marquise. I knew her well: she was, I believe, a truly benevolent person, but had perverted her real, honest, charitable disposition into a sickly sentimentality, by her intercourse with the Neckers, and her admiration of all the *fade* doctrines emanating from the academic grove established at Coppet. She was, moreover "*folle de ce cher Jean Jacques, l'homme de la Nature, et citoyen de Genève,*" and raved about sentiment and presentiment, and the errors

and vices of civilization, and the far more preferable state of savage life, and "the feelings implanted in our bosoms by the God of Nature," &c.; until she, being rather a portly person, and always overlaced, would sometimes turn suddenly black in the face, and alarm her auditors by a desperate fit of coughing, which she owed to her asthma, and which was only quelled by the exertions of the two tall valets who stood behind her chair; the one patted her most vigorously on the back, while the other jerked cold water in her face from a glass ewer, which always stood ready at hand for the purpose. This is the only remembrance *I* have preserved of Madame de Boulainvilliers; but, slight as it is, it will be quite sufficient to show you all the extent of the good fortune which had befallen "the descendants of the royal house of Valois."

"'The marquise took the poor child by the hand and raised her from the ground, without any apparent fear lest the contact of such dirty rags should soil the coloured satin brocade in which she herself was attired. She spoke to her kindly, and endeavoured to soothe her agitation, and finally led the whole party into the very midst of the assembly of dainty ladies and mincing cavaliers, and made them

repeat the extraordinary appeal which had attracted her attention. Jeanne needed no pressing to induce her to comply with her request, and the music was hushed and the tittering of the company silenced by the whining cry, "*Charité! charité!*—a morsel of bread for the starving orphans of the royal house of Valois!"

"'Curiosity was of course excited; the event had given variety to the amusements of the evening. Madame de Boulainvilliers questioned the child, who told her history in a plain and artless manner, and, when she had concluded, drew from the lining of her *casaquin* the papers relating to her birth, which Madame la Marquise read aloud to the astonished assembly. There was a universal movement in favour of the orphans; a most liberal subscription was raised on the instant, everybody present proposed assistance in some way or another to get a *placet* presented to the king, and so great was the interest excited, that the worthy marquise hurried them away to bed, fearing lest some one else might rob her of her *bonne œuvre*, by taking charge of the children, concerning whom she had already formed a multitude of projects in support of her favourite theory. Here was a fine occasion

for displaying the superiority of the philosophy of Jean Jacques! What good fortune to have discovered these children, fresh from the hands of nature, uncorrupted by intercourse with the world, and yet of noble, nay more, of royal blood! How she would love to show to the incredulous and scoffers at the new doctrines the wondrous effects to be produced by the new system of education—the candour, the innocence, the absence of all artifice, which characterise the human heart when untrammelled by the hypocritical conventions of society! She really was alarmed lest any of her friends should beg the children of her, and so ordered them to be put to bed in the apartment adjoining her own.

"'Had they not better have a hot bath first?' drily exclaimed the old Chevalier de Meylau.

"'Fie, chevalier; there is no disgrace in their neglected state. In all artificial communities like ours, it is the seal affixed *to* poverty!' exclaimed the marquise, indignantly.

"'Ay, or the *soil*,' retorted the chevalier; but fortunately the marquise did not hear him; she had been seized with one of her most desperate fits of coughing.

"'Behold, meanwhile, the orphan mendicants, whose resting-place the night before had been a heap of filthy straw, beneath the manger of a cow-shed, reclining on a bed of down, beneath a velvet canopy! But Jeanne declared to us that she did not sleep a whit the sounder, so tormented was she the whole of that night with the fear that Madame de Boulainvilliers might keep and appropriate to her own use the title-deeds which she had imprudently suffered to pass from her hands, and which she had been used to regard as the means whereby she should one day be raised to a level with royalty itself. So much for the candour and innocence, and freedom from suspicion, upon which poor Madame de Boulainvilliers had reckoned so blindly!

"'Once fairly established in the household of the Marquise de Boulainvilliers, the fortune of the children of the Count de Saint Remy changed from the lowest depths of misery to a state of ease and affluence, of which they could not even have dreamed. It appears, however, that the marquise, for some reason or other, very soon abandoned her darling project of rearing her little protegées *à la Jean Jacques;* for, after suffering them to run

wild about her park at Passy, well-dressed but barefoot, for some time, she procured the boy's admission into the Ecole de Marine, despatched the little Marguerite to the care of a nurse in Burgundy, but retained among her dependents the lively Jeanne, always with the promise that she would prosecute her cause at court with the utmost vigour and perseverance, and declaring that she had no doubt of the ultimate success of her undertaking, for that Madame Elizabeth, with all the ardour and warmth of benevolence which characterizes youth, had promised to second her application to the king. It was in the midst of this good will, and Madame de la Motte declared without any fault on her part, that, by a singular caprice, for which she could not account, and which, by the bye, she slurred over in rather an embarrassed tone, her protectress suddenly changed her manner towards her, and one day, having declared to her that it was considered in the society in which she moved, both imprudent and derogatory to retain in her family a person in the position of Mademoiselle de Saint Remy, announced to her that she had taken the necessary measures to place her with Madame Leclercq, the most famous *couturière* of the day in Paris!

"'The astonishment and indignation of poor Jeanne, on hearing this sentence, can well be imagined, but there was no appeal. What right had she to complain, who had been taken from the streets but a short time before by the kindness of the marquise? Besides, there was some consolation still amid her trouble, for Madame de Boulainvilliers promised not to neglect her suit at court, and I really believe did continue to prosecute it with undiminished zeal. It appears that it was Monsieur le Marquis who had insisted upon the dismissal of Jeanne—for what offence remains a mystery—but there must have been a grievous cause of displeasure, I judge, by the hatred which existed between the pair, and which was not satisfied on the part of the marquis, even by the imprisonment and disgrace of his victim.*

* I have heard the circumstance of this dire offending variously discussed, but I believe the true version of the tale to run thus:—Poor Jeanne, who had been afflicted by nature with an incurable curiosity, had discovered, in one of her barefooted rambles in the park at Passy, the entrance to the secret still which M. le Marquis de Boulainvilliers, in common with many French noblemen of the time, worked illicitly, in defiance of law or justice, and from which many of them derived the principal source of the colossal fortunes which they possessed. With primitive simplicity, Jeanne kept her discovery

"'Jeanne remained with the *couturière* for two long mortal years, during which the marquise wearied every minister, every man in place, with prayers and *placets* on behalf of her *protégée*; and, at length, one fine day, she sent for her to meet her brother, whom she had not seen since his departure for Brest, and when she arrived, the lacquey in waiting introduced them both into the *salon*, filled with the highest company, as Mon-

a profound secret, but used to spend her time suspended by a branch above the hole in the mound of earth, which concealed, by a clump of brambles and wild barberries, the entrance to the passage which served for the descent to the unlawful hiding-place. Here she would remain for whole hours together, gazing down, and watching with interest and amusement the whole process of the conversion of good grain into liquor, never once betraying herself by the slightest exclamation or gesture to the poor fools who worked on below, little supposing they were thus overlooked and noted.

The day of reckoning arrived at last; the château—the park—the gardens of Passy, were one morning filled with the emissaries of the police; every closet and cellar underwent a thorough scrutiny; the servants were strictly examined; but M. de Boulainvilliers laughed to scorn every attempt at detection; for he alone of all the household was in the secret of the illicit still. Disappointed and confused, the officers were retiring to report upon the fruitlessness of their errand, when Jeanne came bursting into the apartment, exclaiming, 'I know where it is—I know it—this way, gentlemen—this way! To

sieur le Baron de Valois, and Mademoiselle de Valois!

"'Madame de Boulainvilliers had prepared the scene—she expected tears of gratitude and *élans* of sentiment—but she was disappointed: the boy drew back, abashed at the novelty of his situation, and Jeanne uttered not a single word, but fainted! From this hour did a change take place in her character; her real nature, stirring and ambitious, now began to show itself without disguise; the

think of all this trouble, when I knew it so well! How fortunate I should have just been told what it was you were seeking! Come along, *I* will show you the still. How strange that Monsieur le Marquis should not have known that it was in the park! but I will show him the nearest way. Oh, come along quick! it is in full glory at this very moment—the fire blazing—the sparks flying splendidly; *two* men were at the bellows when I left!'

The consternation, the rage, the terror which these words produced, cannot be described. M. le Marquis was hurried off to prison, amid the laughter of the officers and the sobs and tears of the Marquise; while poor Jeanne received, with astonishment, the furious kicks and cuffs of the marquis, instead of the thanks and praises to which she deemed herself entitled. From this hour the marquis, who had ever hated the child, vowed most bitter vengeance against her, and, on his leaving prison, commenced his system of persecution, which ceased not until he had contributed to bring down his victim to the lowest depths of desolation and infamy.

years of rags and starvation were forgotten, as likewise the humiliation of her days of toil and labour with the *couturière*. She had but one drawback—the insufficiency of the pension allotted by the government, until the estates in Dauphiné and the châteaux in Brittany, and the forests in Maine, belonging to the title, and upon which the crown had seized in former reigns, were restored to her family,—when she might move with the splendour becoming her rank, and take her place among the princesses of the blood royal, as beseemed her name and descent. The pension was of eight hundred livres only per annum—a pittance barely sufficient to enable her to clothe herself with decency; but again did Madame de Boulainvilliers, the tried friend, come to her assistance, and, proud of her work, of having by her exertions caused the title to be recognised, now offered to pay her board in some convent, which she had refused to do so long as she was only poor Jeanne de Saint Remy.

"'She retired then to a convent at Bar-sur-Aube, her native place, where she captivated the affections of the Count de la Motte, a young man of excellent family but small fortune, and they

were soon afterwards married; and, with this auspicious event, *her* romance, like many others, might have been supposed to be concluded. But, alas, for her! there was yet a second volume. When I saw her, as I have described to you, at the Hôtel Cardinal, she had come to Paris to prosecute her suit with the ministers for the restoration of her estates. She was supported by the powerful interest of the Rohans. She was of a bold, enterprising, ambitious nature, fearless and intriguing, with friends at court devoted to her cause; and yet it will to this day excite a certain suspicion in my mind whenever I think of all the circumstances which followed—she never could gain access to the queen!

"'It is said that Marie Antoinette had, in reality, the greatest desire to converse with her, but was prevented from receiving her by the express command of his majesty, who had conceived the most invincible dread of her presence near the throne, from having been told of her extraordinary powers of fascination. He had a great horror of this species of character about the queen; and Madame de la Motte had already acquired (it seemed with great injustice *then*) the reputation

of a troublesome, ambitious *intrigante*. Like all persons of indolent temperament, Louis Seize ever felt a mortal dread of stirring, active people. Infirm of purpose himself, he disliked those who were resolute and steady in the accomplishment of their designs; therefore his aversion to Madame de la Motte would not have been remarkable, had it not been for the very perseverance which it gave him occasion to exercise—perhaps the only instance of tenacity he ever displayed—for he resisted on this occasion the prayers and entreaties of the queen, and the supplications of Madame Elizabeth. Nothing could soften him, and, when pressed to give a reason for this steadiness of hatred, he could not tell—*c'etait plus fort que lui!*

"'Of course, the enemies of royalty and the partisans of Madame de la Motte did not fail, in after times, to lay this preconceived antipathy on the part of the king to the score of avarice, and to the dread he most naturally felt at the prospect of being compelled to resign the magnificent estates and royal privileges of the Valois to the legal claimants. If the suspicion had been just, he certainly would not have admitted their claim to the

title at all. He might have resorted to delay, or have avoided the recognition altogether. As it was, however, the affair certainly displayed want of tact, and great mismanagement, in the allotment of the pension. Either the claim set forth by the Saint Remys was an imposture, and should have been treated with contempt, or it was just, and, when once recognised as such, should have been met with the liberality and consideration which it deserved. This first error was most bitterly expiated, and Louis Seize must often have mourned most grievously over the want of consistency and false economy of his ministers.

"'I cannot help thinking that a more liberal allowance, by rendering unnecessary all the struggles for existence which Madame de la Motte was compelled to make, might have deadened her ambition, and she might have spent her days, satisfied to display her love of intrigue, and exhibit her powers of fascination, on the restricted theatre of Bar-sur-Aube, her husband's birthplace and her own, to which she was much attached, and which she herself declared she never would have left, had not her presence been considered necessary in Paris, so long as there was hope that the estates

might be restored to her family. Every one who knows the sequel of her history must remember that (supposing her to be guilty) it was the affection she bore to her native place, which was the ultimate cause of her ruin; for, had she followed the advice of friends, and fled to England immediately, she might have been saved. But no—how *could* she leave the country without taking one last farewell of her beloved Bar-sur-Aube?—one of the ugliest places, by the bye, throughout the whole of France.

"'I have told you the story which I heard from the lips of Madame de la Motte herself, at the Cardinal de Rohan's table, and I again say that I believe most of the particulars to be strictly true, although they differ in some points from the tale she afterwards told in her memoirs. But therein she might have been influenced by many motives in the recital, whereas with us she was evidently governed but by one—that of exciting as much interest as possible in the breast of the Princesse de Guéménée; for, of course, the cardinal had already heard the story many times before, and I was reckoned as nothing. In itself the history is undoubtedly a most touching one; but when told as

I then heard it, by the heroine herself, with the most expressive action, the most varied intonation, and *real* tears, the effect was irresistible, and I then understood, without further explanation, the fascination in which she held the cardinal, and which had excited my wonder and disgust but so short a time before. Even the princess herself, with all her preconceived aversion, was subdued at length, and, before she took her leave, graciously invited the countess to meet at supper on the following evening a party of friends, among whom were some whose acquaintance might facilitate the prosecution of her suit. Among others I perfectly remember that she named M. de Crosne, *lieutenant de police*. Little did the poor countess dream, when her eyes flashed such proud triumph even on *me*, that the time would come when she would be favoured with many and many an unsought interview with M. de Crosne, in the Bastile, and that from his lips would she have to listen to the repetition of the sentence which condemned her to the most ignominious fate that could in our country befal a woman.

"'I know not by what chance, on my taking leave of the cardinal for the night, his Eminence

happened to mention the name of my mother; but suddenly the whole demeanour of Madame de la Motte was changed towards me, upon learning that 'I was the son of the Countess de Talleyrand, dame du palais to the queen, and she began immediately to *agacer* me with her attentions, with as much determination as she had before avoided even a glance in my direction. She turned, all smiles and affability, to inquire if I had a carriage in waiting to convey me to my residence, and, on my replying in the negative, insisted on my taking the vacant seat in her own, to which I most willingly assented. It was during the short drive from the Hôtel Cardinal to the Place Dauphine, where she resided, that I was enabled to judge more fully of her extraordinary vivacity and tact, and above all, of her wonderful aptitude for business; for, before we parted, she had extorted from me a promise to induce my mother to present her statement to the queen, which promise I religiously kept, although I obtained nought but a flat refusal for my pains, followed by many a bitter reproach for meddling with the affairs 'of this *aventurière*.' This was the first and last time I ever beheld the countess; and, when she became a public cha-

racter through her participation in the affair of the necklace, I had reason to rejoice that such was the case, for had she but imagined that I was fit to serve her purpose, I feel that it is not unlikely I might have lost the right of regarding with scorn the infatuation of the cardinal prince. So great was the power of will possessed by this woman, that there must have been inordinate self-conceit in the man who would have dared to pretend to defy it.'"

"What was the opinion of M. de Talleyrand concerning the affair of the necklace? Did he believe Madame de la Motte really guilty of the theft?"

"'Much less than is supposed by the public, and certainly infinitely less so than her condemnation purported. I once ventured to ask him if he knew any of the particulars connected with this extraordinary business, and his reply, although guarded, gave me a suspicion that, although he did not believe her innocent, he felt convinced that her guilt was shared by some whose birth and influence near the throne shielded them from exposure.

"'There is a degree of mystery throughout the

whole transaction,' replied he, in answer to my inquiries, 'which is, perhaps, destined never to be cleared up. Had Madame de la Motte possessed the cunning of the arch-fiend himself, she *could* not have been guilty of one-tenth part of the baseness which was imputed to her in the act of accusation; there were impediments both social and commercial to many of the manœuvres, which were *proved* against her on her trial. You can form no conception of the excitement produced by this event. The whole kingdom was divided for her sake into two sects, the unbelieving and the credulous; those who believed her guilty, and those who *knew* her to be innocent. ' For myself, I have heard so much on both sides, that my opinion is scarcely stable even now. It is a singular fact that all the persons who visited her were fully convinced of her innocence, and fought like lions in her defence.

"'The Abbé de Kel, the almoner of the Bastile, and confessor of Madame de la Motte, told me himself, that his firm opinion in the case was this: 'That, had she not been unfortunate enough to have already obtained the recognition of her title, she would not have been condemned.' Monsieur

de Breteuil, the great enemy of the cardinal, and favourite of the queen, was most active in procuring materials to inculpate this unfortunate woman, and this circumstance having got abroad, greatly contributed to excite suspicion against Marie Antoinette. But the circumstance which in reality formed the basis of her ruin, was the denial of the cardinal that he had ever furnished her with money. *This must have been false*, for, long before her arrest, she was living in splendour, had an hôtel in the Place Dauphine, with servants and equipages, was richly attired, and covered with jewels, and all this, forsooth, upon her husband's limited income, and her own pittance of eight hundred livres! I remember being told that the furniture of her hôtel equalled in richness that of the palace at Trianon. Mention was made of polished steel mirrors, set in gold, and of a famous bed, the hangings of which were worked in seed pearl, which was bought for an enormous sum by Madame du Barry, the late king's mistress.

"'Another mystery, which completely baffles all speculation, is the total disappearance of the necklace itself, the object of all this turmoil. It was a jewel so well known among the trade in

Paris that every single stone would have been recognised. There was scarcely a person of any note in the capital who had not seen it, as it had lain at Boehmer's, the jeweller's, for more than a year, open to the inspection of any one who chose to ask for the sight of it. I recollect having seen it not a long while before it created so much disturbance. Boehmer had been employed to furnish the wedding jewels for one of my relations, and the morning that he came to deliver them, he brought the necklace for us to view, as a curiosity! Neither in the workmanship nor the size of the stones did it give any notion of the immense value which was set upon it. I believe, however, that this consisted in the stones being all brilliants of the first water, and, as a collection, the most perfect and free from blemish (so Boehmer told my aunt) in the whole world.

"'There is one more story connected with the jewel, which greatly complicates the mystery of the whole transaction, and which is known but to few persons. During the time that I held the Portefeuille of Foreign Affairs, I received a letter from our ambassador at one of the northern courts, wherein he announced to me, with great excite-

ment, the arrival at his court of the Count de M——y and his wife. They had been presented by himself to the sovereign; for, although they might, strictly speaking, have been considered *emigrés*, not having returned to France during the reign of Napoleon, yet, as the count was not at that time the head of his family, and had never meddled in politics, he had a right to claim the protection of the ambassador of his country. The lady had chosen for her *début* at court the occasion of a royal birthday, and she had made her appearance laden with all her jewels, and, "upon her neck," wrote the baron, "she wore a necklace of the exact pattern of that, concerning which all Europe had been roused before the revolution—that is to say, the only difference being, that the three scroll ornaments which are so remarkable, and to which I could swear as being the same, are held by a chain of small rose diamonds instead of the *rivière*, by which they were joined before."

"'The letter gave us all great diversion at home, from the excitement in which it was written; but the emperor, to whom I of course communicated the fact, took it more gravely, and begged me to ask for a drawing of the necklace, which the

ambassador found means to obtain, and which was found to correspond with that preserved among the *pièces du procès* in the Archives; moreover, on its being submitted to young Boehmer, he declared his full and entire conviction that the jewel was the same, from the remarkable circumstance of a mistake having occurred in the execution of the middle ornament, one side of the scroll containing two small diamonds more than the other, and which he remembered had much distressed his father, but which could never have been discovered save by a member of the trade. It was then remembered, and by the emperor himself first of all, that the lady's mother had been attached to the person of Marie Antoinette, and that she had retired from court and gone to reside abroad soon after the trial of Madame de la Motte!

"'So you see there is another link in the chain of evidence which historians, when writing any future history of the Diamond Necklace, would do well to examine.

"'Louis Dixhuit was evidently aware of the history, for I remember once being struck with a conversation reported to me by the Marquis de F—— The young Count de B——, one of the

most notorious *bêtes* at court, said one day in the presence of the king, "I wonder why the M——y family do not come back to claim their hereditary charges at court? What pleasure can they find in the horrid country they have chosen?—*I* could not live there for a single hour."

"'Perhaps you could not,' retorted Louis Dix-huit, in his penny-trumpet voice, and with his childish titter, 'but the Count de M——y *can*,—for it is a woody country, and unlike France, *on y brûle la bûche et jamais* LA MOTTE.'

"'The Marquis de F—— had applied to me to know the meaning of the pun. The ambassador's letter immediately flashed on my memory, but I did not choose to have the affair discussed with my name, so held my peace.'

"This is all the information I could ever obtain from the prince," added C., in conclusion, "concerning the *fameux collier;* but this last anecdote so excited my curiosity, that I immediately set to work and procured every pamphlet of note which had been written on the subject, and, by the help of this new light, was enabled to penetrate much of the darkness by which the affair is enveloped to the generality of the world. If you take any

interest in the matter, it is really worth your while to do the same. What is still further worthy of remark is the fact that the family of the lady in question did not return to France even after the Restoration, and have continued to dwell abroad ever since. The name is one of the highest in France, and it excites astonishment to find it enrolled in the service of a foreign country."

END OF VOL. I.

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